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NEITH BOYCE

Author of "The Eternal Spring," "The Forerunner," "The Folly of Others"



NEW YORK
DUFFIELD & COMPANY
1908



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THE PREMIER PRESS
NEW YORK

APR

PART I

THE BOND

I

THE painter had worked for half an hour almost silently, absorbed in his task; and his sitter had watched him with interest which finally demanded a more active expression. She moved abruptly and said with a plaintive air:

"Do you know, I think I'm tired. I'd like to rest a little now."

"Oh, of course—I beg your pardon, I'm afraid I wasn't thinking of the time," he said quickly, but still hovering before his canvas he splashed in another touch or two of violet colour and then stood back, frowning, and blinking his eyes as though suddenly roused. "Have we been at it very long?"

"Hours, I think," said the lady, smiling and stretching her arms languidly. "It's gone well to-day, hasn't it?"

"Awfully well. But I'm afraid I've been a brute, keeping you at it so." He laid down his brushes and looked at his watch. "By Jove, it's nearly five! Why didn't you speak before?"

"Oh, I hated to interrupt, you seemed so interested. And I was interested, too, watching your face. But I should like some tea now. Shall I make it?"

"Oh, will you? I'm not very good at it——"

Still he seemed but half awake to anything but the canvas, which he was studying with knitted brows. The lady stepped down, moving her shoulders with an expression of fatigue, and her black floating skirts touched him in passing. She paused behind him, glanced at the portrait, and then at him. Her eyes caressed his bent head, joined powerfully to the shoulders, rather rough-hewn under the close-clipped hair, full of vitality and force. With a quick breath he laid down his palette and turned toward her. She was looking at the portrait.

"It *has* got on," she said.

"Oh, yes—all that modelling of the face, you see—it came like a flash to-day. But now let's have tea, and forgive me for tiring you."

Now he looked at her as though he saw her. He looked tired, too, all at once; light had gone out of his face, and lines of nervous fatigue showed in it. Yet it was an essentially vital face; handsome, clear in form, with a warm mouth, cool eyes, a determined chin.

The lady smiled at him and went to the tea-table, which stood behind a painted screen and was elaborately furnished. The alcohol lamp had to be filled, and this Basil accomplished deftly, with an ease that characterised all the movements of his hands. The lamp once going, he threw himself on a couch beside the table, lit

a cigarette for the lady, and his own, and definitely gave up his work for the day. His whole attitude expressed fatigue, and he hid his face for a moment on his outstretched arm and yawned. Then he woke to the social demand. The lady was looking at him with exigent eyes.

"I don't think I shall be so good to you another time," she said. "It tires you as well as me, and then you don't talk!" And she laughed a little. "And I believe I like your talk even better than your picture, though I don't doubt that's going to be good. But I don't want you to be entirely drowned in it!"

"That's the worst of work," said Basil, leaning forward and looking smilingly attentive. "It prevents one from doing more interesting things."

"Not more interesting to you. I watched your face that last half hour, and I never saw you so absorbed in anything. You change quite amazingly—you look keener, harder, and all the friendliness goes out of you. I don't think I like you as much that way. But I believe it's the real *you,* and the other thing is only a social form. You don't really like people as much as you pretend to!"

"I like some people as much as I pretend to," said Basil amiably. "And I like people really more than work, if that's what you mean. I enjoy talking to you, for example, much more than

painting your portrait—only, you see, you wanted the portrait painted."

"Oh, I know. I tell you, I never saw you so much alive—the mental part of you so completely awake—as in that last half hour, when you'd forgotten all about me! Your talk with me is only play, by comparison—it's like a cigarette or a cup of tea."

"It's play in the sense of being pleasure, if you like. But that's what talk with a charming woman ought to be, if I may state my humble opinion. No matter how clever the woman may be, or how much what she talks about may interest you, I maintain that the mere fact that you like to look at her, that you feel her charm, lightens the most intellectual conversation to a point where it may be called, perhaps, play. And for my part, I rejoice in it. A purely mental effort, a problem of form to solve, is something else. It demands a narrower, fiercer concentration. But how many things it leaves out!"

He laughed again, and his look expressed, certainly, a definite pleasure and some playfulness.

Impatience flashed from the lady's passionate eyes.

"I don't say that I give you any intellectual problems to solve," she said impetuously, "or that I make many calls on your deep mental capacity. Only one would like to be taken as seri-

ously, now and then, as a canvas and a handful of paints!"

"Dear Mrs. Perry," said Basil quickly, and it seemed the right thing to do to lay his hand on hers. But at that moment the kettle, like an echo, boiled over passionately, and the lady hastily made tea.

"You know," he went on, "how much I'm interested in you, in your personality, and how much I've enjoyed these talks. A human being interests me much more than a canvas and a handful of paints—but in so many different ways that the expression, at one time and another, is different——"

"Oh, I quite understand," said the lady quickly, as she gave him his cup of tea. "And you know I'm interested in your work," she assured him emphatically. "One reason I wanted to stop posing to-day is that you promised to show me some drawings, you know."

"Yes, of course, if you like——"

He started to put down his cup, but she said petulantly, "Oh, finish your tea first. I'm in no hurry—I mean, to go away."

"I'm awfully sorry, but I've got an engagement a little later," said Basil, and he absently looked at his watch again. "Teresa's coming in. She's due now, but she's always late." He smiled at that. "I daresay we'll have time for tea and the drawings, too, before she gets round."

"Oh," said Mrs. Perry, looking suddenly rather bored. She leaned back in her chair and drank her tea slowly.

She was a woman of about thirty, simply but richly dressed all in black. Her figure was tall, slender, nervous; her face oval and heavier in the lower part; her mouth thin-lipped and imperious; her eyes set rather close together, very dark, full of intensity and will. Her thick black hair was parted on her forehead under her feathery hat. On her fingers she wore a number of jewels. She was handsome, and every motion she made breathed coquetry—not light, however, but passionate and serious—not intentional, but an involuntary appeal.

"This is your wife's tea-table, of course," she said, glancing at the silver and porcelain. "You wouldn't have anything so pretty for yourself, would you?"

"I don't believe so," said Basil cheerfully. "She often works here, you see. This is her corner. She models little things very well. I'll show you something she's doing, if you like."

"Yes, thanks, later. But the drawings first, if you please. Another cup of tea?"

"No, thanks—yes, I will, if you don't mind."

He put down his cup, lit another cigarette, and went to get the drawings, which were in a large portfolio, tucked away in a corner of the rather untidy studio. He held them up one by one be-

fore Mrs. Perry, who lay back in her chair and looked, without other comment than a desire to look at each drawing longer than Basil seemed to expect.

They were nearly all in black and white; here and there a few had touches of colour; all were done with apparent economy of means, with hard simple lines which made a curious effect of life, brutal or pathetic. The subjects helped this effect. They were studies of the life of the city, generally in its rougher aspects. A street-girl and a man sitting at a table in a bare café; two tramps on a bench in the park; a chorus-girl, singing; a vaudeville dancer; a girl lying on a bed, smoking opium; a negro drinking-place; a scene from a Japanese play, a man seated in the middle of the stage committing hara-kiri; the audience at the Chinese theatre, a row of laughing faces; the Italian puppet-show; an East Side café, full of Slavic types; some Eastern women doing the *danse du ventre;* street scenes in the Jewish and Syrian quarters; a Bowery bartender; some immigrants at the Barge Office; a row of men at a gambling-table; a drunken group at the Haymarket.

"What life you put into them!" said Mrs. Perry as he laid the last one down, and she shivered.

"You don't like that kind of life?" Basil asked, laughing.

"Why do you take those particular forms—sordid forms?"

"Because they interest me."

"Yes, but why do they interest you? It seems to me that art ought to show us the beautiful, the ideal—not sordid, revolting things." She was genuinely moved. Her eyes looked near to tears. "Life is too terrible when you take it that way—you play with it!"

"No," said Basil. "I try only to show it as it seems to me in some of its significant aspects. I don't claim anything large in the way of art for these sketches—but one might perhaps detect some sort of intellectual intention in them. They're comments on social man—man at play, trying to amuse himself. Perhaps you've noticed that nearly all of them are that."

"Yes, and you satirise the poor creatures, you make them more tragic than they are in reality! I can't see any beauty in that!"

"You really haven't seen what I've tried to do," said Basil positively. "And I believe it's your fault and not mine. As to reality—what, dear Mrs. Perry, can you know about the reality of these people? . . . And I think your idea of beauty might seem rather chromo-lithographic to me—something like Greuze, perhaps? Or, perhaps, I don't know what you mean by beauty. I assure you that I see enormous interest in some of those things I've done—in the subjects of them,

I mean. If they were to me ugly and sordid I shouldn't be interested in them. You'll probably think me sentimental, but almost any aspect of life seems to me beautiful in some way."

"Sentimental, no! I don't see any sentiment in those things—they're merciless! What you mean by beauty, I suppose, is that you see something interesting to do technically. It's your drawing you're interested in, not the poor creatures themselves."

"No, no!" said Basil, laughing. "It's really the poor creatures. I'd like to show what I see, that's all. And apropos of your demand for beauty, I remember what a good painter said to me once, in criticising one of my attempts in the Paris studio: *'Ne fais pas le reve; fais les choses qui font rêver.'*"

"But what is there to make one dream in those things of yours? No, I don't mean that, they do make one dream, but nightmares! What is the good of dwelling on that side of life, so long as one can't really help those poor people——"

"Oh, you're dreaming of soup-kitchens and tracts, perhaps? That's not what I meant, either! Look at this fellow again. What do you see in him?"

He held up the sketch of the bar-keeper.

"I see," said Mrs. Perry slowly, "a big, muscular body, a sharp eye, a brutal face——"

"That's all? Look at the grip of that hand on the counter as he leans across it—look at the poise of his head and the square glance. That's a successful man. He makes the business go, and he can deal with the toughest crowd that ever tried to rush the place. I sketched him the other day while he told me some of his exploits. Do you think that man doesn't enjoy his life? Do you feel like giving *him* a soup ticket? . . . And these two bums——" he showed the two tramps on the Park bench, talking over a tattered newspaper. "That one with the spectacles is well known on the Bowery. They call him the Professor. He's a university man, and if you give him two bad whiskies he'll talk better philosophy and better English than you'd be apt to hear anywhere else in town. He went to pieces, as society would say, that is, he lost his job, because of a drug habit. Well, now, as it happens, he's lost the drug habit. He's exchanged a chronic dyspepsia and a worrying family for a tough body and a peaceful soul. Don't ask me how he did it—I only know he did. There's a lot of primitive man even in a Professor, and coming down to it may be a shock, but it isn't always a misfortune. Do you really think, dear Mrs. Perry, that the pretty people who ride in carriages and shine in opera-boxes are dead sure to get more out of life than my friends here? Do you think they exemplify bet-

ter the beautiful and the ideal? Do you think even they'd be better fun to draw, not to say talk to?"

"No, I don't think so, and that's not what I meant. I daresay tramps are more interesting to talk to and even to draw than conventional people—at least for you. You're so curious about 'life'! How young you seem to me! How old are you, anyway?"

"Thirty," said Basil, dropping down again on the couch and taking his second cup of tea.

"And I'm thirty-two. I was married at twenty. I feel about fifty. . . . If you'd had my experience you wouldn't think the ugly tragic things of life beautiful, or make pictures of them."

She looked tragic, her intense eyes fixed on his face. Above all, she looked confidential. It was not her first confidence. She perhaps enjoyed this situation more than Basil, but he was interested. The stuff of human life, the story, the type, appealed to him keenly under whatever form he met it, and he was apt to requite warmly whatever of interest people gave him in this way. But it was an intellectual and not an emotional warmth; and, though it might burn with a keen and deceptive flame for the time, not to be counted upon for steadiness.

Of the sort of interest that Mrs. Perry wanted to awaken in him, there was as yet, if she had

known him better, no sign. He liked many people, in the degree in which they interested him; one more intimacy, of the typical sort in which he contributed intellectual frankness and the other person emotional frankness, was not enormously important to him. With the lady it was otherwise.

II

TERESA came down the avenue, where a vague breath of spring floated above the muddy pavement. She walked with her quick, light step toward the little park at the end of the street, seeing with pleasure the faint touch of green showing through the arch; but before reaching it she turned into a side street, smiling. She held her light-grey dress carefully up from the walk, showing pretty, carefully-shod feet. A great bunch of purple violets was fastened in her short coat. Her eyes looked out from the shade of a broad black hat, gaily, blue as the sky.

She went toward the rushing noisy stream of Sixth Avenue; midway was the studio-building, her destination. In front of the building a carriage was standing; a discreet brougham, dark-blue in colour; two resplendent bay horses, a coachman in light livery. A footman with a lap-robe over his arm walked up and down before the door of the studios. Teresa seemed to see in the expression of the horses and the servants that they had been waiting a long time. She knew the carriage, and at sight of it the smile of her eyes had vanished and she blushed suddenly with vexation. She went into the building, but in the hall she hesitated, walked up and down for a few moments, and finally stopped before a

half-open door, from which issued husky strains of a bass voice chanting,

" In deinen Augen hab' ich
Einst gelesen . . ."

Teresa tapped at the door.

" *Come* in," said the voice.

She entered, but the sculptor was not visible. In the half-twilight of the studio the crowd of his vast cold images, his " family," as he called them, loomed up with stony chastity. They were all of heroic size or more. In the middle of the room a colossal horse, a palæolithic horse, arched his neck and lifted a fore-foot. If the foot fell, the floor would certainly sink. But Teresa had seen it poised now for two years in the same spot. The horse perhaps would stand there until it or the building crumbled to pieces. Even the sculptor did not expect anyone to buy it.

" Behüt dich Gott, es war zu schön gewesen,
Behüt dich Gott, es hat nicht sollen sein,"

warbled Erhart behind a screen where he was making coffee.

Teresa mimicked the dying fall with which he rendered the last words; and Erhart burst from behind the screen, still in his loose linen working-apron, his powerful arms bare to the elbows, a steaming coffee-pot in one hand.

"You!" he cried. "Come in, come in, and have coffee with me! Excuse my looks, I have just stopped work, I'll be ready in five minutes. . . ."

"Don't bother, I can't stay. I have to fetch Basil," said Teresa.

"But he has a sitter. Mrs. Perry hasn't gone yet."

"How do you know?" asked Teresa, smiling. "Do you watch for her?"

"Not I, but I can't help knowing when she goes by. There's a swish, swish that you can't mistake, and a blast of perfume—whew! Araby the blest couldn't touch it."

"That's the reason you leave your door open, I suppose," suggested Teresa, looking bored.

Erhart was busy setting out cups, plates, a plum-cake, and two silver mugs containing milk and sugar on a small table. He put the coffee-pot on the table and disappeared behind the screen.

"Do sit down," he begged eagerly. "This is awfully nice. When Mrs. P. goes we'll get Basil in. You know it's ages since you've been here. I want to show you my new group."

"Well," said Teresa indifferently.

She sat down and poured out the coffee, listening in spite of herself for the rustle of perfumed skirts. Erhart's pleasure in seeing her evoked no response. But she was not ungra-

cious. She smiled at him as he came to sit near her, and said that the coffee was delicious.

"Yes, if I could sculp as well as I can make coffee . . .!" said Erhart. "Not that the new group is so bad—I'll show it to you . . . But how are you? I haven't seen you for——"

"For three days. Why haven't you been up to lunch?" enquired Teresa rather maliciously.

Erhart's cold, handsome face betrayed a slight embarrassment.

"Well, I imagine you're tired of me," he said. "I suppose I have been coming too often . . ."

"Nonsense. You needn't fish in that way. I shan't say anything agreeable to you. I'm in a bad temper. Let's see your famous group."

He got up and lifted the damp cloth from the clay. A male and a female figure, of more than life size, were shown, half interlaced in the relaxation of sleep.

"It's one of the studies for my 'Night,'" said the sculptor.

"How inhuman they are!" commented Teresa. "Like all your things. I think it's because you make them all so big and so muscular. Look at that woman's biceps! She isn't a woman; she's a monster."

"She's splendid," said the sculptor with conviction. "She's ideal. Art should show what people ought to be; it should be remote from what they are. As the philosopher says, 'The

Real is an immense outrage on the Ideal.' When art submits to reality it's pure treason . . ."

He stood looking at his clay figures, drinking his coffee slowly. In his big frame and his clear-cut, high-boned face with its contemplative, large eyes and tossed blonde hair, was something of the cold and rather empty power that he put into his work.

"When are you going to let me do that bust of you?" he asked.

"Never. I don't want to bore myself sitting to you, simply to serve as a pretext for something which wouldn't in the least resemble me! Anyone else will do quite as well. And you know I hate posing."

"You pose constantly for Basil."

"That's why I won't for anybody else. I have too much of it."

"I could do a very good thing of you," said Erhart, looking earnestly at her. "A sort of mermaiden head, with smooth hair, with lowered eyelids and a streak of wildness under them—and it would be much more like you than Basil's Madonna effects."

Teresa turned her head suddenly. She heard Basil's voice. He was coming down the corridor, escorting Mrs. Perry. Teresa caught a glimpse of the lady's sweeping black skirts as they passed the door. She rose, and ignoring Erhart's attempt to keep her a little longer, bade him good-

bye and went on up the hall. There in the bare room where Basil did his calm, persevering, ardent work, was the portrait of Mrs. Perry, the figure indicated by blotches of violet colour, the face quite definite. Even in Basil's impressionistic sketch it might be guessed that she was handsome. The painted eyes fascinated Teresa, and she was studying them when Basil came abruptly in. His face lighted up at sight of her with a quick pleasure that made him look boyish, and a feeling of relief gave impetuous energy to his greeting.

"Dearest—sweetheart! Where did you come from?" he cried gaily, taking her round the waist. "You're late."

Teresa bent slightly away from him and said neutrally:

"I've been waiting in Erhart's place for half an hour. It's you who are late. You said you'd be ready at five."

"By Jove, I didn't notice the time! The light was so good, and the whole thing went so well that I never thought of stopping. And, besides, I expected you to come in any minute. Why didn't you?"

"I didn't want to interrupt you," said Teresa, coldly, slipping away from his arm.

"Oh, nonsense . . . What's the matter, dearest? What have I done—are you angry with me?"

He put both hands on her shoulders, with a little roughness, and bent toward her, smiling quizzically, tenderly.

"My new dress! I'm sure you're all paint," cried Teresa, and writhed away from him.

Basil looked at her, puzzled and apprehensive, and she looked at the picture, maintaining her offended air. Basil put his hands into the pockets of his brown corduroy coat, took out his cigarette-case, put it back again, and then stood quietly gazing at her, his lips compressed slightly, his eyes keen, searching, somewhat troubled. Teresa's moods, though he did not take them very seriously, always troubled the surface of things for him. He was used to coaxing her into good humour, and it was a labour that he never shrank from, for until it was accomplished nothing else seemed very important,

"Well, how do you like it?" he enquired at last of Teresa's chill profile.

"It is a little theatrical," she said.

"Well, so is she. That is, she would seem so to you, I daresay. She's very emotional."

"Really? She looks as though she had committed a mortal but pleasant sin, and was about to go to confession, which she would enjoy even more."

"That's clever of you," said Basil with a quick admiring smile. "She *has* the capacity for sin, and for confession, too. She's of the religious

temperament, like most women who are very physical."

"Oh," said Teresa, with a contemptuous droop of her eyelids. "You'll be saying next that she's spiritual."

"I do say it—she is. She's thoroughly mystical—something *you* never can comprehend, you little pagan!"

Again Basil put his arm round his wife, and again she repelled him, gently, but with unmistakable irritation.

"Why, Teresa, what is it?" he demanded. "What's gone wrong—don't you like me any more?"

"No, I don't. You're too horrid," she replied with decision.

"Well, tell me how," said Basil, drawing a breath of relief. Usually when Teresa was offended she retreated into a blank silence; when he could get her to express her grievance he knew it was already half forgiven.

"Tell me—I didn't mean to be," he said with a pleading look.

Teresa was the picture of melancholy. The corners of her mouth and her eyelids expressed resignation to all the bitterness of life.

"I think you might have remembered you had an engagement with me—and on this day, too—I daresay you forgot even what day it is—our anniversary dinner——"

"Dearest!" cried Basil. This time he seized her firmly and kissed her. "I didn't forget it—I've been thinking of it all day! . . ."

"No, you haven't. You forgot we were to go out at five for a walk. You only thought about painting that horrid woman, while she told you about her sins and said her prayers! Hypocrite!"

"Which is the hypocrite—she or I?"

"Both of you. Go and change your coat, I want to get out. It will be dark now; we've missed the twilight."

Basil was not yet forgiven. Teresa was still melancholy. Even the consciousness of the excellent cut of her new dress, the perfume of her extravagant bunch of violets, the feeling of Basil's uneasiness and fear lest their evening should be spoilt, the knowledge that she had only to smile to make him radiant and gay—all these mollifying influences she resisted for the sake of discipline. It was necessary to make Basil a little miserable before making him happy. And also there was a vague but real shade that overcast her pleasure in the rolling spectacle of the avenue along which they walked, in the soft cooling blue of the sky where stars were appearing, and the mild air that smelt of spring, the perfume of flower-stands at busy corners, the haze of lights, the roar from streets beyond of the great cityful homeward bound—all the dis-

cordant sights and sounds that closed her round, isolating her small, personal, absorbing life in the midst of this flood of life. She drank in the sad gaiety of the hour, the dividing-line between day and night, between the day's work and the quest of repose or pleasure. Its restlessness spoke deeply to her; the fatigue or the expectation of the faces that flashed into view under the lights, the glaring allurements of some streets to the west and to the east, offering food and drink and amusement, the quick roll of a closed carriage up the avenue, a girl passing whose sparkling eyes rested intently on Basil. . . .

Teresa glanced up at him quickly. Yes, he had seen the girl. Teresa surprised the rapid return of his glance to herself. She hated that other look—the interested, appraising look that betrayed a whole past of fleeting encounters, of fugitive souvenirs. She saw it often, for often Basil was unconscious of it himself, and denied it. She saw the involuntary look that women gave to him. And each such perception cast in its tiny grain to trouble her mind, conscious vaguely of a problem there to solve, of which all the conditions were not as yet known to her.

III

THEY walked up to the entrance of the big Park, a wall of dark-green starred with electric lights; Basil talking vigorously about the events of his day—his picture, a luncheon with a French painter visiting the city and two Russian anarchists, an interview with a publisher whom he had invited to consider making a book of his drawings. With Teresa's hand clasped on his arm he felt forgiven for an offense which he was not conscious of having committed. They took the lumbering stage, with its cadaverous horses and quaint air of decay, and rode down to the restaurant where Basil had ordered dinner. They were the only passengers, and Teresa said, as the primitive vehicle rolled pathetically against the rapid current of luxury setting uptown:

"Dear old One-Hoss Shay, I hope it doesn't fall to pieces before we get there! How nice it is to be poor, Basil."

"What does that mean? I know it doesn't mean what it says," he answered, laughing and holding her close against his shoulder.

"Yes, it does. People don't bother about us, and we needn't bother about them. I like to

feel lost in this tremendous whirl. It makes somehow my troubles seem small and my—happiness great."

"Dearest—you're happy then?" Basil said tenderly, half-startled.

"I'm perfectly happy. I keep wondering what will happen to spoil it all. . . . Someone will take you away from me!"

He laughed out at that.

"If you cared half as seriously for me as I do for you——!"

But suddenly she trembled in his clasp, and hid her face on his shoulder, tilting her big hat over one ear.

"Teresa! You strange child! What *is* the matter with you to-day?" he cried, trying to see her eyes.

"No—nothing—let me alone," she said imperiously, though in a stifled voice. And she clung to him silent for some moments. Then she sat up, put her hat straight, and cried joyously:

"We've gone too far—stop the thing!"

Basil stopped it, and Teresa jumped gaily down the steps.

"It lasted after all!" she cried. "I always feel things are going to fall to pieces—what a relief when they don't! . . . I thought our dinner was going to be spoiled, but now it isn't, and you shall tell me all about your Mrs. Perry."

"Mrs. Perry! What's she got to do with our dinner? I'll tell you all I know with pleasure, but——"

As Basil opened the outer door of the restaurant for her, Teresa smiled defiantly into his perplexed eyes.

"She came near spoiling our evening, I tell you! You know when I'm in a bad mood . . ."

"Oh, I know!"

He shook his head ruefully. They found their little table, with a bouquet of red and white carnations upon it, and the chairs tilted up. It stood next the wall, before a large mirror, which reflected all the pale colouring, shaded lights, and palm-trees of the room, and a vista of other rooms beyond. The place had a foreign air; nearly all the patrons spoke or tried to speak in French to the waiters, and when the orchestra began to play Strauss waltzes an air of gaiety diffused itself among the mixed crowd. By eight o'clock the room was full. Basil had ordered cocktails to begin their dinner and some good champagne. He liked Teresa to drink a little, for it made her gayer and more talkative, and her melancholy moods irritated him. To-night melancholy hung in the air for a time. Teresa looked vaguely about the room and seemed to be half-listening, half-dreaming. But suddenly her eyes brightened, she leaned forward, smiling at Basil, and began to talk.

"This is nice after all," she said. "I feel the spring to-day, and it always excites me and makes me sad. . . . And then I've been thinking. . . . It's a year to-day since we were married —does it seem so long to you?"

"Yes, longer. I feel as though I had been born married," Basil said with his quick radiant smile.

"Oh, *I* don't! It seems like yesterday that we ran away! It's like a dream, the time has gone so fast. . . . And *I* was not born married! You are the same as you were before, but I am different. . . . The centre of gravity has been changed, and I am tottering!"

She said it laughing, but with a meaning that Basil answered by a look of passionate tenderness. Unconscious of the people about them, he put his hand across the table and touched hers. Teresa glanced into the mirror. It reflected a blur of bright colours, for most of the women were gaily dressed; a number of ordinary and rather dissipated faces and a few interesting ones. It reflected Basil's fine and vigorous profile and his brown colouring; and Teresa's face in three-quarters view, her dark, silky hair, rolled in a thick coil on her neck; her narrow eyes that varied in colour like sea-water, from grey to green or blue; her thin but sweetly curved and sensitive lips. The mirror showed also a corner of the next room and a table where two persons were

dining. Teresa bent forward with sudden interest.

"There's Mary Addams! In the other room —don't turn, she'll see we're looking at her. Guess who's with her—you'll never guess—it's Jack!"

"Jack Addams! Oh, you're mistaken, it can't be, Teresa!"

Basil was quite as keenly interested.

"But it *is*, I tell you! And they look like a pair of lovers. I wonder if they can be going to make it up."

"Oh, they can't be. That would be too much. After the things that came out in the trial! Even Mary wouldn't dare!" protested Basil. "Are you sure, Teresa?"

"Perfectly—I can see him perfectly. . . . And there's no limit to the imbecility of women," said Teresa. "But if she *does* take him back . . ."

"She won't, on the children's account. She wouldn't have gone into court with that case if it hadn't been impossible——"

"Well, why are they here together then, and hid away in a corner where they think they won't be seen? None of Mary's crowd ever come here, I suppose. There, she's seen us." Teresa quickly looked away. "Let her think we haven't seen her."

"By Jove! it's queer," said Basil. "I thought

they had made a clean division into two camps and never even went to the same houses."

"It's true. At least the few people that stood by Jack Mary has cut," said Teresa. "It's the queerest thing I've ever known."

To keep her eyes away from that reflection in the mirror, invisible to Basil, she looked over the room, where light veils of smoke were beginning to rise in the warm air. The orchestra was playing a Hungarian medley of wild slides and shuddering thrills. The waiter lifted the bottle of champagne from its ice-bath, looked at it suggestively and filled their glasses.

"We'll have another, shall we?" said Basil.

"No, we won't. The place is beginning to look hazy now."

"Oh, nonsense, you've only had two glasses."

"*And* a cocktail. It's quite, quite enough. Even for an anniversary. I wonder what the Jacks are celebrating! Their unwedding?"

"Never mind them, let them celebrate whatever they like. They interrupted something very interesting that you were saying."

"What was it, child?"

"Why, that you are different. I can't see it. You're the same cool little person that you were when I made you marry me!"

"No, I'm not. I'm in love with you now."

He threw back his head and laughed, and there was a note of pain in his laughter. He

looked at her, and his eyes were clouded suddenly with tears.

"You! No—if you were!"

"You foolish boy, you dear creature, can't you see it? I'll prove it to you. Basil, I'm frightfully jealous."

"Jealous! Not you. How could you be—what is there to be jealous about?"

"Everything! Everybody! Every woman that comes to your studio, or that you look at in the street. Every woman you've ever known. Your past—your present—your future."

She changed colour. Her eyes, deeply blue now under straight, dark brows, looked fiercely into Basil's. But he took her emotion lightly.

"That's absurd, you're only trying to please me. You know you're the only woman in the world for me, the only one who has ever existed for me, really."

"Except some hundreds that you have been or are interested in! Except Mrs. Perry, except Alice, except—a lot that I don't know!"

"Teresa, you little charming idiot, you know perfectly well you're talking through your hat! Women don't care about me. Only two or three in my whole life have—and I haven't cared for them. They like me, they find me companionable, that's all. Alice has a purely friendly interest in me, and I in her. Mrs. Perry comes to me on business. I never see her socially——"

"On business! Now, Basil, do you pretend to me that she only comes to have you paint her portrait?"

"You're not very flattering to my art," said Basil, with an air of pique. "Now comes out what you really think about me! *Du sprichst ein grosses Wort gelassen aus.*"

"You know what I mean. You're an artist, but *those* women don't know it. What do they care about a portrait that won't flatter them and that isn't signed by a big name? Mrs. Perry will put hers in the garret, when she's tired of you."

"Let her, so long as she pays me for it," said Basil easily. "Do you think I make love to her while I'm painting?"

"No, but she makes love to you and you encourage her. You wouldn't rebuff any woman. Even if you didn't like her, you'd be too afraid of looking ridiculous! Your vanity, Basil, will be my death."

Teresa's liking for light phrases had very much lightened the discussion. They both laughed. She took up her champagne-glass and he touched it with his.

"To the most charming woman in the world," he said.

"You do well to make her anonymous—but I'll drink it, for your sake. May you be happy!"

"I am," he said over the rim of his glass.

A moment later he said: "Here comes Mary Addams—she's coming to speak to us—no, Jack's somewhere out of sight."

He got up as a tall woman dressed plainly in dark-blue cloth, with a clever and worldly face, came to their table.

"Don't let me disturb you—just a word—just to ask you not to say you've seen us!" she said, smiling at them both.

"Of course not," both answered at once in some slight confusion.

"You'll think it awfully queer—but we dine together on the quiet now and then. Jack's impossible as a husband—but he's very nice at dinner once a fortnight!"

She nodded and went back, with her quick supple motion that drew the eyes of the people she passed; and they saw her leave the place, followed by the big, good-looking Addams, who carefully avoided looking in their direction.

"People are queer," said Basil, as he dropped into his seat again and lit a cigarette. "Will you dine with me once a fortnight after you divorce me?"

Teresa did not answer. She glanced dreamily about the room, at the various faces which at this stage of dinner all looked lightly or suddenly sensual. There were many fat, dark, foreign people, the women in tight light satins and huge hats, the men with heavy eyes and heads

sunk between their shoulders. "What a collection of Steinlens!" said Basil. At the table next to them, which had been vacant all this time, now sat down a vivacious French girl, talking gaily to four young men. She looked curiously at Basil and Teresa, and Teresa instantly estimated her charms: Brilliant eyes and teeth, a pliant figure, an effective toilette. But her hands were ugly, her mouth shapeless, and her complexion sallow. Basil glanced at her indifferently.

"Odd that you almost never see a pretty Frenchwoman, even in Paris. They never seemed to me attractive—too nervous, too mental."

"Let us go and have coffee somewhere else," said Teresa suddenly. "It's too noisy here."

"You haven't enjoyed it! What's the matter, dearest? You used to like this place——"

"Yes, I like it generally, but I'm tired."

She was petulant, perhaps from fatigue. But when they got out into the soft spring night, and walked the few squares to the little hotel with the terrace-garden that Teresa had suggested, and particularly when they were sitting alone on the terrace, where a few lights glimmered on the bare budding twigs of trees and vines, she became gay. They drank their coffee and liqueurs, and sat on till Basil felt it necessary to have a whisky and soda—talking eagerly or softly, hands clasped across the table, more lov-

ers now than they had been when they married a year before. There were no reserves in their talk. Both were of the world, with an experimental interest in life. Teresa's interest was at times the paler, perhaps for reasons of physical vitality, for she came of an old and rather tired stock; but at times also it was more intense than Basil's. He was younger in race and in temperament, full of vigour, and where Teresa questioned and doubted he went straight on; but he took life, not emotionally as Teresa did, but with a cool vision that sought beauty. His mind desired the closest contact with reality, and he desired the same mental experience for Teresa. He wanted her to know the world as nearly as possibly as he knew it, to see it as he saw it. He enjoyed a masculine intimacy of talk with her. He said to her in effect, in the phrase of Sainte-Beuve: *"C'est toujours du plus près possible qu'il faut regarder les hommes et les choses."* And he unrolled to her a vivid picture of the physical, mental, moral life of a man which by turns amused, saddened, revolted, but always fascinated her. The characters of many men, of many women, come into the story; the men intimately known, the women generally superficially and in a single light aspect. Basil's keen interest in human beings, joined to an attractive personality, had produced the rich harvest of reminiscences which he offered up to Ter-

esa. But, oddly, in the whole story there was no emotional entanglement. It was the freshness and force of a first real passion that he had brought to her. To him she had been and was a magical thing; a creation of the mystical sensuous beauty that he loved.

IV

TERESA next morning lay late in bed, reading the Arabian Nights in sixteen large volumes of delicious French. The books had come two days before, and were a gift in honour of her anniversary, from her sister's husband, Ernesto di Pepoli. Teresa had a contempt for Ernesto, but she was forced to admit that he had a distinct grace in the small things of life. She had not seen him for two years, and who else would have remembered so long that she loved the Arabian Nights? In her delight at getting them she had written Ernesto a really affectionate letter; in spite of her reflection that the money to pay for those sixteen volumes (Ernesto had had them bound at Siena) would have to come out of Nina's shallow pocket. Nina had sent only a cablegram.

The door of Teresa's room was open, and from the tiny hall and drawing-room (the whole flat was no bigger than Erhart's studio) came the scent of flowers. The people who knew her best had remembered yesterday—for she and Basil were still in the state of obvious content with one another which made floral recognition suitable. Most of the flowers, indeed, had been

sent in by Basil. But Gerald Dallas had sent her a great bunch of violets, the ones she had worn at dinner; they were now reviving in a vase on the table beside her. And Major Ransome, her father-in-law, had sent white roses, which fact touched and amused her. Major Ransome admired Teresa, and though he was afraid of his second wife, he was apt to be reckless with the pocket-money she allowed him.

Unfortunately, with the roses, Major Ransome had sent a note saying that he would come to lunch on the present day; and Teresa had already asked Gerald Dallas to lunch and go to a concert with her. It was not the Major's presence that she minded, but the amount of thought that must be spent on any meal of which he was to partake.

She and Gerald would have lunched on chops, baked potatoes, and salad; but now there must be a clear soup and a cold lobster and a cheese soufflé; and it was always touch and go with the art of Mary, the temperamental Irish cook. If she was in a bad temper, if the wind stood in the east, or she had stayed out too late the night before, the result would be disaster. Usually she liked to cook for Major Ransome, since he appreciated her success.

"*Our* Mr. Ransome don't care what he eats," she would say with implied reproach to Teresa. Teresa took no interest in cookery, and to her a

man tremulously concerned about his food was a humorous and pitiable spectacle.

Now as she lay reading she heard from the kitchen the melancholy "keen" of an Irish melody rising and falling monotonously. It was a good sign; Mary always crooned this dirge when she was happy, and Teresa endured it philosophically. But it made her feel herself rather lazy; she, too, had her work to do. Basil had gone away early, after taking his coffee with her in her room. Even Basil was working. The roar of the city without penetrated her solitude —a humming, disquieting bass note with an occasional sharp crescendo. It was necessary to be active; it was impossible to read the Arabian Nights after ten o'clock. She got up, took her bath, and dressed quickly; saw that the drawing-room was dusted; arranged the flowers, dusted the piano, which Mary invariably forgot, put a match to the fire, wrote several notes of thanks, posted up her accounts; and then, having a clear hour before her and a rush of energy in her veins, she put on her hat and grey furs, for the morning was cool, and went out. The air was clear and sparkling; she drew a long breath as the doors of the flat-building closed behind her and shut in the be-rugged entrance-hall, the potted palms, and the negro boy-in-buttons. The tiny leaves on the trees shivered in the wind, and Teresa, breathing it in, felt as though she were

walking on the downs facing the sea. She was happy, light-hearted. Basil did not worry her. She knew he had an appointment with Mrs. Perry, who intended leaving town soon and seemed to want the portrait finished in a hurry. Very well, let him have appointments! She knew he was flirting with Mrs. Perry, and she felt now a light contempt for him. She, Teresa, had all his heart, she had his happiness in her hand, she knew her own power. In her mood of to-day she recognised it calmly and felt independent of him. For the moment she was free, as she had been before she married, and for some time afterwards. The business on which she was going, too, was a reminder of her bachelor freedom.

Her rooms, in which she had lived very happily alone for a year before her marriage, were high up in an old building on the edge of the roar and rush of the great middle-class business thoroughfare. The endless noise of trolleys and elevated road had not disturbed Teresa. She had liked to live in the midst of this flood of life, as she liked the view from her windows to the west —an endless spread of roofs, chimney-pots, smoke and steam, which did not stain the clear air. She had made herself a little niche in the huge city; and the feeling of its vastness closed her round comfortably. She was as much of it as she wished to be. She regarded it—and so she did, at that time, life in general—as a spec-

tacle, which might roll turbulently about one and leave one amused and unmoved, with one's small activities and one's dreams.

For several years, in fact since the death of her surviving parent, Teresa had filled out a microscopic income by work which was more pleasure than anything else. She had a slender but real artistic gift, developed in the course of her family's eccentric wanderings abroad. She modelled tiny bronzes, useful or purely decorative, little figures of animals, naked children, or fantastic beings out of fairyland; and she designed jewels of worked silver and gold and semi-precious stones whose colour was their chief value. These things were exhibited from time to time and sold —through an agent, as Teresa disliked money-dealings—for prices such as "art" commands in our country; the price of the exotic, the mysterious.

Her rooms had old-fashioned size and squareness. The living-room served also as a studio, and was ornamented by the remains of the family furniture, picked up abroad with more taste than money. Heavy tables and chairs of Italian walnut, cabinets and a desk elaborately inlaid, long curtains of faded but rich red brocade, and some pieces of embroidery on the grey walls, made a formal but agreeable setting. The dining-room was furnished chiefly with books—collected by Teresa's father in each

country they had lived in, and usually left behind, in large boxes marked "library," when the family took its unpremeditated flight. When Teresa's mother, a widow, had decided to come home, she had tried to reassemble her scattered household goods. The "library" seemed to stand the stress of time and removals better than the furniture, much of which fell to pieces in transit; Teresa had about three thousand volumes covering her walls, with space left only for a portrait of her father, painted by a German friend of the family in acknowledgment of an unrepayable loan. It was not a bad portrait; it vividly presented Ronald Grange as Teresa remembered him—his thin, bearded face, his soft, fiery eyes, his whole look of meditative fragility. He was a South Carolinian, and his wife an energetic but unpractical New Englander; and they had quarrelled so much retrospectively over the war of secession and the ethics of slavery that at times in their European wanderings the family had split; Teresa going with the father, whom she adored, and the elder daughter, Nina, with the mother. Some years after her father's death Nina had married an Italian of good but impoverished family. She had been married for her beauty and for love, having no money. But soon it appeared that love was hardly enough, and that money was pressingly necessary.

Agonising appeals to Mrs. Grange led her to relieve as much as possible Nina's situation, and to leave her by will, with Teresa's consent, two-thirds of the small property on which the other two had lived. Nina had been the mother's favourite, Teresa the father's; it was to Teresa that he left his books, and the book-plate and gold seal and few pieces of plate descended from English ancestors; and the sword of her grandfather, the slaveholder and rebel general, whom the New England part of the family repudiated. Ronald Grange had little more to leave—except a memory to Teresa full of pathetic charm.

When Teresa married, she said to Basil Ransome:

"I shall keep my rooms, you know, in case we don't get on." And he, gaily admitting the provisory nature of their arrangement, had yet a jealous pang, which he concealed as little as he concealed anything else from her. For the wary Teresa had not seemed even half-tamed when he did succeed in marrying her, and how much she was won was known only to herself. They had now had a year together, and had got on marvellously, though with frequent quarrels. Teresa had not even once desired to retreat to her bachelor independence. In her flat lived a young woman, an art student whom

Teresa had befriended, and who looked after the place. Teresa came almost every day to work in the studio. Often she took people there to tea. It was always a place to retreat to when she had quarrelled with Basil. Once or twice she had even stayed over night there with Miss Pease, who cooked her own meals on a chafing-dish; and curled up on a divan Teresa tasted the luxury of freedom, as they chatted about the old days of the studio in Paris, where she had worked hard for two years.

Teresa liked enormously to have this little *pied-à-terre* apart from Basil. He had his work separately, she had hers, and they met at the flat on equal terms. She clung to outward signs of independence more and more, since of late she had felt sometimes that its spirit was escaping her. She was painfully aware now that she could not do without Basil, and that, if she had not let herself go, it was of no use: she had gone just the same. In her calm moods she looked back on her fits of pointless jealousy, her emotional crises, as simple idiocy. But it seemed to her more and more probable that this idiocy was the woman in her waking up. Basil had chosen to call the creature—blind, primeval, essentially a slave—to life, and he must take the consequences!

As his stormy courtship calmed, what he

wanted was the peace of the ménage; quiet, sweet, though not monotonous intimacy. Teresa took a perverse pleasure in making scenes, and disturbing him: Had he not proceeded on the theory that she was cold and indifferent, deficient in instinct and emotion?

V

TERESA was late to lunch; she found the three men waiting in the drawing-room when she came in, fresh and full of colour, from her rapid walk. Two of them seemed not to mind being kept waiting—but then Gerald never minded anything she did, and the Major's manners were perfect; and Gerald was playing Bach, and the Major loved music.

Basil, however, was in a bad humour, as she perceived from his walking restlessly about the room and smoking a cigarette with quick vicious tugs.

"It's twenty minutes past one, Teresa; where on earth have you been?" he demanded irritably.

"Business," said Teresa blandly. "I'm awfully sorry. Come on out, I won't even stop to take off my hat. I suppose lunch is ready?"

"I should suppose so. For a wonder, it was ready on time," growled Basil.

Teresa took the Major's arm and led him out, wishing that Basil had some of his parent's suavity. The Major said something cheerful about the bright spring morning and the roses in her cheeks, and put an extra shade of gallantry into his manner of seating her. She al-

ways felt that he was sorry for her when Basil was rough; the Major never could have been rude to any woman, not even to a plain woman. Teresa perceived why it was that two women had fallen in love with and married the Major, to their own practical disadvantage. He was purely an article of luxury. He was a very neat old man, with smooth-shaven, rosy, withered cheeks, carefully-clipped silver hair and moustache, and the sweet blue eyes of a child. His small figure still had the military carriage, and the scar of an old wound at the corner of one eye brought out oddly the gentleness of his face. He was very well dressed; his second wife liked to see him looking smart; but he almost never had pocket-money.

In this respect he was poorer even than Gerald Dallas, who never had anything but pocket-money. Gerald always gave the Major a drink, or several, when they met, and had frequently lent him five dollars till the first of the month; but Gerald's coat, buttoned closely round his slim figure, was shiny at the seams and the pockets, and his long nose was red from the wind. He always pawned his overcoat on the first warm day, "for fear of moths," as he had explained to Teresa. The Major loved him because of his conviviality and his music, Teresa because of his Celtic melancholy and his sentiment for herself. He was one of Basil's bachelor intimates,

and the hardest drinker of them all; but now he had become more Teresa's friend than Basil's.

By the time the grapefruit had gone its way, and the soup had proved to be really clear, and the whisky decanter had been twice round the table, the slight constraint in which the meal began had vanished. Basil, as his hunger was appeased, regained his good humour; but Teresa avoided looking at him, and her smile, as she listened to the talk or joined in it now and then, was by no means gay. Basil's roughness always took her by surprise, and always wounded her, especially when it came close on the heels of a passionate expression of his love. She then felt not only pain, but humiliation, and a sort of anger very different from his—not quick, not forced to expression, but half-dormant somewhere in darkness, slow to disappear. Basil called it "the sulks," and much preferred his own kind. "At least, I get it out and over with," he would argue.

Now he sought Teresa's eyes across the table, which was gay with sunlight and yellow daffodils in little vases of Italian pottery, and silver dishes full of sweets, and Mexican lace-work fine as cobwebs; for, even if meals were late, Teresa always had a pretty table. But she would not look at him, till at last he asked her a direct question.

"Teresa, will you pose for me this afternoon?

I got a note from Mrs. Perry this morning, saying she's off motoring for a fortnight, so I'm out of a job for to-day."

"Can't, I'm going to a concert with Gerald," she said, and now her narrow eyes, half-closed, sent a knife-like glint at him.

"Well, afterwards. You could come soon after four for an hour."

"No, I shall be too tired."

Basil shrugged his shoulders, and after a moment's pause the talk went back to politics. The Major was a great politician, Gerald was a newspaper man, and Basil was interested in anything that anyone else could talk about. But politics bored Teresa, and though she seemed to listen she was really absorbed in her own thoughts.

First she rejoiced that Mrs. Perry had disappointed Basil. "That will show him how much she cares about him and his picture," she reflected. "I wonder if he is vexed about her, or about the picture? That was the reason of his flying out at me when I came in. But he shan't be rude to me simply because other women have put him out of temper. I will—I will——"

What she would do about it remained vague, dying away in undertones of thought and feeling; but what was perfectly definite in her mind was the intention that Basil should pay for his unkindness.

The lunch, she was glad to see, was good; only

the spring lamb was overdone, because of the half-hour's delay. However, the Major enjoyed his food with his usual zest, at times approaching ecstasy. And Teresa, as usual, was half-pleased by his enjoyment, and half-amused by its triviality. He seemed to her like a child that had been given a piece of cake; but so did Gerald when he was given anything to drink; so did Basil given a different sort of pleasure. They were all children, she thought—all greedy, all absurdly anxious to enjoy themselves. But of the three the Major's pleasure seemed to her the most trivial. How *could* a man have a passion for food? How could a woman love a man who loved new peas and lobster? . . . But perhaps the Major had been less devoted to eating in the days when Basil's mother fell in love with him—the splendid red-haired woman with the strong chin and piercing dark eyes, whose portrait, in black velvet and Venetian lace, hung in Basil's study. At any time, though, the Major must have been a child in comparison with her. She had been rich, for those days, and very headstrong, and had run away with the Major against the wish of her relatives; and, when her son was born, she had made a will carefully tying up her property for his benefit, and leaving the Major only a life income. A year later she had died in child-birth. Basil was like her. He had her vigour, her keenness, her

good sense and will. From his father he took his artistic impulse. . . . And that father, a few years after his wife's death, had married a little half-German woman, whose only merits apparently were that she cooked to perfection and made his physical man thoroughly comfortable. Comfortable! He could marry for that, and have several more children—after the fine creature who had condescended to love him had died in her youth. . . .

Teresa looked at the Major's scarred cheek, and watched the loving care with which he extracted the meat from a lobster-tenacle—and she marvelled at the ways of man.

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She and Gerald left the table when the dessert came on, and even then they were late and had to wait in the corridor of the concert-hall till the first number was finished. Teresa was out of humour, partly because she had not had time to change her dress, and she hated having to hurry; partly because Basil had called after her that he didn't think he should be home to dinner, and she suspected he meant to make a night of it, and drink more than was good for him. But Gerald's attempts at gaiety and his extreme nervousness ended by distracting her attention from herself. She had observed at lunch that he was drinking a good deal of whisky; and now in his physical

constraint, the tense looks of his ugly but charming face, and the occasional twitch of his hands, she saw familiar signs of danger. These continued when they were seated, and even through the music. The string quartette played wonderfully. Teresa could not help enjoying it, though she was conscious all the time that Gerald, sitting with his arms tightly folded across his thin chest, was not listening. They did not talk much during the pauses. Gerald had talked well enough at lunch, and Teresa began to feel irritated with him, and terribly sorry for him at the same time. However, when she looked at him, during the last of the programme, and met his miserable eyes, she felt a thrill of disgust.

"Gerald, you'll come back with me and have tea, won't you?" she whispered.

He shook his head, "I can't, thank you."

'Yes, do. I want to go to my studio first, and Miss Pease can give us some tea there. Then we might walk for an hour, and you could dine with me. Basil may be out, and I hate dining alone."

"I can't."

People were looking at them severely, and Teresa said no more till the music ended on a beautiful soft contralto strain dominated by the violoncello, which kept the audience a moment in their seats and silent, before the prolonged applause and noise of dispersal.

"I am going to walk down, and you must come a little way with me," she commanded, as they moved up the aisle in the crowd.

When they were out in the street and had distanced the knots and groups of people, so that they could not be overheard, Teresa said, looking straight ahead:

"Would you rather I didn't speak of it?"

Gerald made a hopeless gesture. "No use," he said bitterly. "I'm only sorry I've made a damned fool of myself and spoilt your afternoon. Don't think about me."

"You know I can't help it. Gerald, how long is it since—since you——"

"Since I made a beast of myself last time? It's nearly three months, and now it's got to come. Don't—let me go now—I hate myself for going to your house to-day. Will you forgive me? Yes, I know you will, and you despise me, and you ought to despise me, Teresa. I ought to have the decency to keep away from you altogether—it's the only sort of decency I might have still."

They had reached a street corner, and Gerald stopped short. Teresa felt, suddenly, very tired, very weak, and inclined to cry. The look in his eyes chilled and disgusted her, as it had done before. She put her grey muff up to her face, and two tears suddenly fell on the fur.

"Oh, Teresa—don't, for God's sake! It doesn't

matter what I do. It doesn't matter, I tell you. I shall never come near you again."

He turned round and fairly bolted up the side street. Teresa walked on down the avenue, holding her muff against her face, and drying her tears behind it. She became aware that she must get out of the street, and that she wanted some tea—hot, strong, and bracing. She called a cab, and drove down to her rooms. Miss Pease was busy with some visitors in the studio, and Teresa made her own tea in the dining-room, and cried by herself on the divan while the water was heating. She had taken off her hat and was mopping very red eyes with a damp handkerchief when Miss Pease, a subdued-looking girl, came in with a little bronze, a finger-high study of a naked child playing with a frog.

"A lady wants to know if she can have this for thirty dollars, instead of thirty-five——" she began neutrally, then said in embarrassment, "Oh, I beg your pardon——"

"Tell her she can't have it at all. Tell her it's sold," snapped Teresa.

"But——" began timidly Miss Pease.

"Tell her it's sold!"

Teresa made her tea almost black, and drank three large cups of it. Then she took out her little silver cigarette-case and began to smoke, lying back on the divan. She had ceased to cry, and felt perfectly indifferent to every-

thing. Let Gerald Dallas drink himself to death if he chose, or if he could not help it. He was right—she *did* despise him. And let Basil dine out if he chose, and be angry about nothing, and make himself odious. She suspected that he was beginning to have secrets from her. If so, it was all over between them. It was clear that no dependence was to be placed on any of the creatures. Aunt Sophia was perfectly right. She thought of Aunt Sophia because that lady's voice—clear, slightly nasal and authoritative—was now to be heard dominating the slight buzz in the other room.

VI

AUNT SOPHIA came into the dining-room—tall, handsome, imposing, in grey clothes that rustled—and peered through her eye-glasses at the limp person on the divan.

"Teresa, why don't you have a light? Can you give me a cup of tea, I've just come from our Friday meeting—why are you feasting by yourself in the dark?"

"Because I've been crying," said Teresa languidly, getting up to turn on the electric light.

"Crying? So you have. Have you been quarrelling with Basil?"

"Basil! Whenever I'm upset, Aunt Sophia, you jump to the conclusion that it's Basil."

"Well, I'm sure it generally is. Whenever I see a woman unhappy, I know a man's at the bottom of it."

Aunt Sophy poured out her tea and added liberal hot water with a firm hand.

"All I say is, don't cry over them—they're not worth it," she added.

Aunt Sophy was the one person to whom Teresa ever confided anything. This she did for two reasons: First, that Aunt Sophy invariably took her side with passion—if passion could be associated with that lady. And secondly, that

Aunt Sophy's temperament and views of life being diametrically opposed to her own, this support always had the effect of making Teresa see the reason of the other side. Hence she never took any of Aunt Sophy's freely offered advice, but usually bore away from such an interview an increased tenderness for Basil, and a conviction that women in their own right were absurd. But Aunt Sophy's absurdity was amusing, and also it was a comfort occasionally to Teresa to hear her husband roundly abused under the general head of "men."

"It's more than Basil this time," she said gloomily, lighting another cigarette.

"More than Basil! You don't mean——"

"Oh, nothing shocking. It's only a friend of mine—of ours—who has gone off on a drunk."

"Teresa, what language!" Aunt Sophy dropped a spoon in her dismay.

"Well, it's what Basil calls it. It really is too awful, Aunt Sophy. I'm so fond of the poor fellow—he's just as dear and sweet as possible—and this thing is ruining him."

"Disgusting!" said Aunt Sophy.

"Yes, it *is*—it *is*, and that's the worst of it. I felt this afternoon, when I looked at his face and saw that fearful appetite in it, and imagined what he'd be like in a few hours—I thought I never wanted to see him again." Teresa half-sobbed as she said it.

"Well, why *do* you see him again? Such a man is unfit for decent society. If he can't or won't conquer his vile habit, surely it's too much to expect a woman to be his friend. And a young woman, too—really, Teresa. I don't think it's at all proper for you. I suppose he is one of *Basil's* friends?"

"Yes—but he is mine too, now. And yet he's slipping away from us. In just this year I've known him, I've seen him going down. And I *did* think—for three months now he's been quite straight—and now, to-night——"

Her voice faltered.

"It's a shame. You say you were with him this afternoon—and he actually *told* you?"

"Oh, I guessed—I couldn't help knowing, from his looks—and he confessed it."

"Teresa, you know too much of such things! Basil ought to shelter you from such knowledge as that—he ought not to allow——"

Teresa laughed. Aunt Sophy usually argued that the husband's authority was a relic of barbarism, not to be recognised by any woman of spirit.

"Basil doesn't believe in sheltering me," she said. "And you know you said only the other day, Aunt Sophy, that the day of the clinging vine was over, and that the pretence of keeping a strong right arm between us and the world——"

"I *did* say it, and it's true, it is only a pretence—but I referred particularly to material things," began Aunt Sophy.

"But you congratulated me on keeping my independence even in the thraldom of marriage, and——"

"I meant financial independence. Of course, I don't think any woman ought to be dependent on a man in that way—or in any way she can help. But what I say now is that there is no need for thrusting the ugly side of life on us more than is necessary. Let the men keep their weaknesses to themselves—as much as they can. That's what I mean, child. Heaven knows we see enough of them at their worst, anyhow, without unnecessary disclosures."

"I wonder," said Teresa musingly. "They don't seem to be able to keep anything to themselves, that's true."

"No, because they admire themselves in everything they do. As somebody or other says, a mirror tells the truth to a woman, but it always lies to a man. A man thinks his meanest actions are justifiable somehow, if only on the plea of necessity. I daresay your friend, as you call him, thinks it absolutely necessary for him to intoxicate himself once in so often."

"I suppose he does. And I suppose it is," said Teresa sorrowfully.

"Teresa, Teresa! You are taking the man's

point of view! You will end by being sorry for that creature, because he makes a beast of himself! Don't lend yourself to such weakness, I implore you! Any person who wants to be decent can be so. . . . Teresa, I wish you had more women friends. You don't see enough of women. It would be a wholesome corrective to your ideas. It is a very bad thing to associate almost exclusively with men——"

"They are more interesting," said Teresa, in a melancholy minor.

"They seem so now, doubtless, because you are very young. I once thought so myself, before I married your uncle. But you will change your mind, Teresa, and perhaps you will find some day, as I have, the keenest interest in identifying yourself with the cause of Woman."

"Aunt Sophy, you've been making a speech at the club."

"Certainly I have. We had a very successful meeting—several enthusiastic speeches, and six new members joined. We appointed a delegation to go to Washington next month, to see our senators and congressmen, and interview the President."

"And are you one of them?"

"Yes, I was unanimously elected spokesman."

"That's because you're so handsome, Aunt Sophy. They depend on you to impress the flinty legislatorial bosom."

"Really, my dear, I prefer to believe it is because I have some powers of speech," said Mrs. Boulter.

However, she smiled. She was, in fact, a handsome woman, with remarkably little suggestion of the clinging vine. She was very erect, very stately, even sitting in a low chair, with large blue eyes, a broad forehead, thick grey hair, and a gracious white-toothed smile which had something glacial in it—a hint of her native New Hampshire rock.

"How nice to go up to Washington, and feel so important," said Teresa languidly. She leaned back against the cushions and sighed.

"Well, why don't you join us?" enquired Mrs. Boulter. "I'll propose your name, as you know, any time you like. And I'm sure you will find the work exceedingly interesting. With your intelligence you are sure to come round to us sooner or later. There's nothing like marriage, too, to make one see clearly the real position of woman. When you do see it, Teresa, you will want to stand up for your sex."

Teresa smiled rather wanly. She began to feel that she should have a headache as the result of her emotion about Gerald. At this moment Miss Pease came in, agitated and flushed.

"Oh, Mrs. Ransome," she cried, "what do you think has happened! The pearl pendant—Miss Carruthers——"

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"What—not again!" said Teresa.

"Yes—you will think it my fault—I was showing it to someone else, and carelessly laid it down—and I *meant* to watch her every minute—but she slipped out. Of course I will—pay for it——"

"Annette Pease, you little idiot!" said Teresa, getting up and arranging her hair before a glass. "Pay for it, indeed! I know you're careful—don't worry about it. We put these things down to profit and loss."

"What is it? Miss Carruthers? Pearl pendant?" cried Mrs. Boulter.

"Yes, *the* Miss Carruthers—father's dear old friend, who takes such an interest in me! Didn't you know she was a kleptomaniac? She's run off with a seed-pearl and emerald thing, and I lose about eighty dollars. Never mind. Come along home with me, Aunt Sophy, come to dinner."

"Eighty dollars! But, surely, you can get it back."

"No, I can't, without—making trouble. She would just deny it. Poor old thing, she was actually arrested once for shoplifting, but they hushed it up. It's pure mania—she has money enough. I've heard of her taking the spoons off the table when she goes out to dine."

"Well, she ought to be locked up!" said Mrs. Boulter sternly. "Why don't her family attend

to her? It's immoral to allow people to go on like that. Teresa, you ought to *do* something."

"I'm going to—I'm taking you home to dinner. Basil said he should probably dine out."

"Well—thank you—I shall be very happy," said Mrs. Boulter, after a moment's hesitation, which seemed to weigh the chances of Basil's dining out. Mrs. Boulter, in fact, was one of the few people who bored Basil, and she did not enjoy boring him, unless she could do it from the platform; and he would not let her mount the platform in his presence. Teresa bade an unusually cordial adieu to Miss Pease, and led her aunt, still protesting, downstairs and through the dark hall.

They turned into the avenue, jammed with the home-going crowd, where talk was an impossibility. Night had already fallen, between the rows of high buildings; but the lighted shop-fronts, the street lamps and the electric lights of the cars succeeding one another at momentary intervals, made it bright as day. They walked for a few blocks along the avenue, breasting the rustling throng, crossed between two clanging cars and a charging body of cabs and automobiles, and turned into a side street. Here it was quieter, though the roar of the avenue still pursued them, even into the palm-set hall of the apartment house.

While Mrs. Boulter was admiring the flowers

in the drawing-room, Teresa changed her dress for a white, short-waisted one, put a necklace of green stones round her bare throat, braided her hair in two braids and coiled it round her head, and, returning, she took one of the Major's white roses and stuck it in the braid just over her left ear.

"All this just for me?" said Mrs. Boulter. "I must go and make myself pretty, too—or, at least, presentable."

She disappeared into Teresa's bedroom, down the hall. Teresa was poking up the fire when the sound of a key in the outer door made her turn and smile, her eyes suddenly bright and soft.

Basil came in with the slam that usually announced him, flinging his hat and coat on a seat in the hall.

"Hello!" called Teresa. "Thought you weren't coming back."

"Hello, kid," he responded cheerfully. He appeared, with two parcels, which he deposited on a table; then came over and kissed his wife ardently, touching the rose in her hair, and the curve of her neck.

"Changed my mind," he said. "In fact, I met a man and asked him to dinner here."

Teresa's pleased smile faded a little.

"Did you? I'm afraid there isn't much dinner," she said.

"Oh, well, you can send out for a steak, can't you? And I brought some bully old whisky and cigars."

"That's just like you—you think a steak, whisky, and cigars make a dinner, don't you?" said Teresa mockingly. "Who's the man?"

"Oh, an Englishman I met at the club. I knew him years ago in Cairo, just for a day or so—he's a nice fellow, you'll like him."

"What time is he coming?" enquired Teresa coolly.

"Seven. He's going to the theatre, so I made it early."

"Well, I must interview Mary." Teresa added reluctantly, "Aunt Sophy's here. I asked her to dinner."

It was now Basil's turn to look dashed, and he did so completely.

"Oh, hell!" he remarked, the gaiety of his face quite quenched; "what on earth did you do that for?"

"Why shouldn't I? You said you were going out."

"I said I *might* go out. . . . Well, that spoils everything. You can't have any talks with that old bore about. I wish I'd known, I'd have given him dinner at the club. If I had such boring relatives as you've got, I certainly wouldn't have them around."

"How about your stepmother? Didn't I ask her to lunch last week? Aunt Sophy's brilliant in comparison."

"That's different," growled Basil. "Lunch isn't dinner. One doesn't expect to be bored at dinner."

Teresa shrugged her shoulders, and went out to see the cook. When she returned Mrs. Boulter was in the drawing-room and Basil in his bedroom, whence he presently called to her, after fruitlessly ringing his bell.

"Teresa, there isn't one single clean shirt in my bureau, except some with the buttonholes torn!" he exclaimed. "Where on earth is my laundry?"

He stood in the middle of the floor, a brush in each hand, his hair fiercely rumpled. His broad shoulders contracted nervously; an irritable fire shot from his eyes.

"*I* don't know," said Teresa indifferently. "I suppose Mary forgot it."

"Yes, I suppose she did. Why doesn't she answer the bell? It's impossible to get anything done properly in this house."

Teresa, without replying, went down the hall, and returned after a few moments with a large paper bundle suspended by a string.

"*There's* your laundry, cross-patch," she observed loftily. "And all because of poor old

Aunt Sophy," she said to herself as she went into the drawing-room. "It's odd how she puts him in a bad humour. If it hadn't been for her, he wouldn't have minded about the shirts. Really, his temper——!"

VII

THE dinner, with this unpromising beginning, was, in fact, a sad failure. Mary, perhaps fatigued from her efforts at lunch, had not risen to the sudden occasion, and the steak was overdone. Mrs. Boulter was very much in the foreground, and to make matters worse, Erhart the sculptor, who had provided himself with a standing invitation to the house, dropped in. On him, at least, the excellent old whisky was not lost, but Basil's guest, the Englishman, declined it, and even the mild lure of the Chianti. A guest who is given a bad dinner, and will drink nothing but water, is a trying person. Basil was plainly nervous, and therefore more voluble than usual, and Erhart provoked as much controversy as possible, according to his wont. He even argued with Mrs. Boulter on women's rights, while she hurled the Constitution, the Pilgrim Fathers, Benjamin Franklin, and the doctrine of natural right at him. In reply he quoted large extracts from a recently published German work, in which women were disposed of as "too low in the moral scale even to be criminals," and were denied souls, on the basis of the facts that the soul resides in the

memory, and that women have no memory. At this proposition two crimson spots rose to Mrs. Boulter's cheeks, and she demanded the name and presumable dwelling place of the author, but, on learning that he had committed suicide at the age of twenty-four, she ejaculated in stern triumph: "Exactly what I should have expected! Beware how you give currency to his ideas."

"Do you expect me to commit suicide?" rejoined Erhart, his long blonde face wrinkling in a sarcastic smile. "No, madam, I intend to live to make the statue of the first Woman-President. She will wear knee-breeches, and, for the occasion, a Roman toga. Her pedestal will be composed of a sewing-machine and an overturned cradle, with the motto, 'Per aspera ad *nauseam*.'"

At this point Teresa interfered and suppressed Erhart, and Basil began to talk to the Englishman, whose name Teresa had not made out, about the East, with which apparently the latter had some official connection. So far he had said very little, and seemed to contemplate with an amused and slightly astonished air the incongruous company in which he found himself. He was a man of an unusual type, evidently not of unmixed English blood, above the medium height, lean and delicately made, dark, and with a curious colour in which grey predominated

over brown. His dark eyes were very observant, his dress was meticulously careful, his manner quiet, and especially so by contrast with that of three out of the other four at the table. Teresa alone had anything approaching his own inexpressive repose. She was as unmoved as though the dinner had turned out well, and the talk had gone smoothly, and as little talkative herself. Basil, on whom the social burden seemed to rest, fidgetted distinctly under it, and drank more of the old whisky than he might have done otherwise. He and Teresa exchanged the sort of cheerful glances which masked on his part a grievance and on hers a calm perception that he was unreasonable. True, the evening was spoilt, but why allow a little passing discomfort to disturb one's whole moral being? An uncomfortable social situation was, however, a positive torment to Basil. By as much as he expanded and glowed when he was at ease, by the extent of his possible charm, was to be measured the effect on him of this sort of mishap. Teresa reflected about him, while talk went on disjointedly, and arrived at a feeling of keen liking for him; she saw something lovable even in the way he hurled himself into his coat, and departed with the Englishman; for, when the latter had declined coffee and liqueurs, it was already rather late for his theatre.

Aunt Sophy soon went away, and Erhart was

left on Teresa's hands. They drank their coffee before the open fire in the drawing-room, Teresa thinking about the volume of the Arabian Nights, to which she would get back as soon as he went, and listening absently to his unfavourable remarks about the English. At last he said abruptly:

"You are bored—I shall go. I'm sorry I came to-night. You are bored with most people, aren't you? And you are almost always bored with me. . . . I suppose I did not behave well to-night?"

"I'm tired—that's all. But you were horridly rude to my aunt," said Teresa.

"Well, how can I help it? She is such an awful fool, you know. She knows nothing about anything. What do women expect when they take that tone, anyway? They are just as much insulted when you're polite to them; they think it's condescension. I don't know what they want —except a chance to lecture us. And that they can do much better in private. Hasn't your aunt got a husband?"

"She had one," said Teresa, with a glimmering smile. "But he vanished. The combination of lectures and boarding-house life was too much for him. He evaporated."

"I'll bet he did. What a woman! You might as well marry a high-pressure cylinder. She's a typical American."

"She would be proud to hear you say so. She considers the American woman the crowning triumph of civilisation."

Erhart made a profane exclamation. "Then civilisation might as well come to an end. It would, too, if it depended on the American woman. She would have no children, she would starve out the men, and then what? A lot of Kilkenny cats, they would eat one another. A tough meal your aunt would make, too! I believe she's made of whalebone and gutta-percha."

"You like women made of butter and jam, don't you?"

"Oh, heavens, I don't like any kind of women," said Erhart, getting up to go. "At least any show kind. They ought to be kept behind the veil. Tell your aunt that, from me."

He lingered a moment, moving about with his oddly beautiful hands the small pieces of porcelain on the mantelpiece, then said: "I'm sorry I have bored you. But I'm not sorry I was rude to your aunt."

"Oh—rudeness is the most boring thing, I think," murmured Teresa. "I hate quarrelling, especially at meals."

"You call all discussion quarrelling! What would you have? Everybody bowing and scraping and agreeing with one another? . . ."

"Oh, *I'm* not going to discuss with you!" said Teresa, laughing, and he finally took him-

self off, with a look of pique on his cold Northern face. Teresa yawned, got herself a cigarette and her volume of Arabian Nights, and made herself comfortable in a long chair between lamp and fire.

But she did not begin reading immediately. She lay thinking vaguely of the incidents of the day. She was tired, and her thoughts had the incoherence of dreams. Gerald Dallas and Miss Carruthers were oddly mixed up in them. She remembered a visit she had paid Miss Carruthers, when the old maid had taken her up into a bedroom, and showed her a curious collection of treasures—rolls upon rolls of silk and chiffon, boxes of lace, of long delicate gloves, and silk stockings, jewelled hair ornaments, and filmy scarves. All these were dimly destined to the adornment of a pathetic, withered person, and yet would probably never be worn; for something prevented Miss Carruthers from actually appearing in them. She usually wore drabs and faded yellows in public, but her passion for the accumulation of these frivolities of a pretty woman's toilette furnished the main pleasure of her life. The emerald and pearl pendant had now doubtless been added to her hoard. Aunt Sophy would have held her sternly responsible; Aunt Sophy knew exactly where to draw the line of moral responsibility. She had drawn it in Gerald's case, too, with unhesitating hand.

Anyone who wanted to be decent could be; and decency was an exact quantity. It took no account of kinks in the brain, of perverted instincts like poor Miss Carruthers'—of physical obsessions stronger than the will. If you were afflicted in any such way you ought to be "shut up." But how much pleasure and colour would be taken out of life if all except rigidly rectilinear and decent people were shut up!

Even Aunt Sophy herself—probably now seated in her solitary room at the boarding-house, before a desk loaded with papers on Woman Suffrage—Aunt Sophy had deserted her husband. Teresa wondered if she never regretted the domestic atmosphere, even though her boarding-house was an elegant one, and she was called a paying guest. But after all a domestic atmosphere pervaded by Aunt Sophy must almost itself suggest the paying guest. And her favourite phrase about the vanished Mr. Boulter had been: "Your uncle can be more disagreeable than any man that ever lived." Aunt Sophy thought marriage a hideous state of bondage. Teresa's cheerful view of it always astonished her, but she said, "Just wait, my dear. It isn't in the first year that you learn to know a man."

Poor Aunt Sophy! But she should not have married a disagreeable man. Marriage was very simple. You married a person you liked, and

did just as you liked, exactly as before; and the person adored you, and even if he lost his temper sometimes over a beefsteak, or a missing shirt, he was still the most charming person in the world.

Teresa smiled, looking into the fire, which had sunk together into a red core of coals. It struck her that bed would be a more comfortable place to read. Basil objected to her reading in bed, but all the same she had had an electric light hung just over her pillow, and she quoted Charles Lamb to prove to him that it was the only place to read in. When she had arranged herself luxuriously under this light, in her quiet room, where the roar of the city ascended only as a muffled bass, she unbraided her long braids, and, with the book propped on her knees, she slowly brushed the dark ripples of hair out to their ends, and began to read:

"Il y avait, dans la ville de Baghdad, un homme qui était célibataire et aussi portefaix.

"Un jour d'entre les jours, pendant qu'il était dans le souk, nonchalamment appuyé sur sa hotte, voici que devant lui s'arrêta une femme enveloppée de son ample voile en étoffe de Moussoul, en soie parsemée de paillettes d'or et doublée de brocart. Elle souleva un peu son petit voile de visage et, d'en dessous, alors, apparurent des yeux noirs avec de longs cils et quelles pau-

pières! Et elle était svelte et fin d'extrémités, parfaite des qualites. . . ."

She read on and on, for an hour; then her eyelids dropped, her head sank on the pillow, and she slept, still holding the book. . . .

The latchkey turning in the lock woke her. She heard Basil stop outside her door, and speak her name in a low voice. She answered, and he came in.

"What are you doing—reading at this time of night?" he asked, frowning slightly, and looking pale.

"Why, what time of night is it?" said Teresa sleepily.

"Oh, late—after two. Look here, you promised me you wouldn't——"

"No, I didn't. Where have you been, you dissipated wretch, tell me that!"

"Oh, nowhere in particular. I met some fellows, and we sat around talking——"

"And drinking?"

"Well, a little——"

"A good deal, I imagine. I thought you said you wouldn't——"

"Well, I wouldn't want to knock about at night, if you'd make it comfortable at home. . . ."

Teresa made no reply, and after a moment he went out. She braided her hair in the two long braids, turned out the electric light, and lay

looking at the window, vaguely lit by reflections from the street.

Basil came back, as she had known he would; wrapped in his blue dressing-gown, he sat down on the side of her bed, and began:

"You must admit you spoiled the dinner to-night."

"No—did I?" said Teresa sleepily.

"You know you did! Not only your aunt—perhaps that was an accident—but I've asked you a dozen times to get another cook, and yet you will keep——"

"Oh, Basil, you think cooks grow on blackberry bushes! You must admit she gave us a delicious lunch, and it's rather a trial to have three other guests shot in unexpectedly for dinner——"

"You're so soft about her! If you gave her a good hauling over now and then she might do better——"

"Basil, you're an idealist."

"Yes, that's right, joke about it! Much you care how things go on, and whether I'm uncomfortable or not. You don't care a damn for me, that's the truth. To-day you wouldn't come and pose to oblige me, you preferred to spend the afternoon with Dallas——"

"I had an engagement with him."

"You might have come afterwards."

"I couldn't. I was feeling too ill."

"Ill? What made you ill?"

"He did—Gerald. He told me he was going to get drunk."

"He did! By Jove, poor old Gerald—I began to think he might be going to run straight after all. But now he'll go it, once he's broken out. Poor devil!"

"What—will he do?" asked Teresa faintly.

"Do! He'll drink whisky till he's blind drunk, and then, when he's got his breath, he'll begin again. He'll keep it up for a week, very likely, and then somebody'll pick him up out of the gutter, and he'll be sick and sorry for a month."

"What horrid idiots men are," said Teresa.

"Perhaps they are, but they're not so egotistic as women," said Basil stiffly, recollecting his grievance.

He sat silent for a moment, moving his shoulders nervously. Teresa smiled in the darkness. He did not want to go to bed with that grievance. He was tired of it. She was silent, too, wickedly.

"Good-night!" he said abruptly, getting up.

She let him get to the door, then she called him back.

"Oh, come here a minute, I want to ask you something."

"Well, what is it?" He stood still.

"Come here, can't you?"

"Can't you ask from there?"

"No. Come here, I tell you."

He approached with dignity, and sat down on the extreme edge of the bed.

"Well, hurry up, I'm cold."

His tone was aggressive, but Teresa read beneath it. She reached up and put one bare arm round his neck, and murmured:

"Silly old thing!"

He made an effort to hold his position. "You won't do a thing I ask you to! You won't even stop reading, though you're spoiling your eyes. . . . You don't care anything about me, that's the real truth! If you did, you——"

She drew his head down and kissed him.

"Idiot!" she murmured.

His arms went round her, caught her up, held her close.

"How I love you!" he said angrily.

VII

THE May morning was warm. Its soft radiance penetrated the studio, even with the north light, and the patch of sky seen through the upper half of the open window was tenderly, opaquely blue, crossed by an occasional small downy cloud. The first touch of summer languor was in the air. The rattle of wheels and whirr of cars in the streets below, and the street cries, seemed oddly softened, as though the world had grown more spacious. Two great masses of lilacs, in brown jars, set on the floor of the studio, sent out their fresh perfume. Basil sang tunelessly as he worked, and his eyes glowed happily. Teresa was posing for a picture, begun some weeks before, but interrupted by her own engagements, or Basil's. Basil had usually a picture of Teresa in some stage of progress. He had painted her a dozen times, and each time the picture had been sold. However, Basil was only "one of the promising younger men." He had often occasion to laugh at such a judgment upon himself. Newspaper praise or blame merely amused him, and he did not even care much whether he sold his pictures or not; "except," as he said, "that one doesn't want too many of them round, mussing up the

place. I shouldn't like to live in the midst of an unbroken circle of my creations, like Erhart, for instance. And giving them away is an unworthy subterfuge." His successes had been made so far with portraits. Character interested him as much as paint, and, though brother artists agreed that "his colour was sour, and his drawing bad," the sitters were always interested in what he made of them. The portrait was something to talk about, though usually, "It doesn't half do you justice, my dear. Your nose really *isn't* as large as that, and as for your complexion—well, I suppose yellow and mauve are the latest discoveries, so we must say nothing—still, there *is* a likeness——"

Teresa was sitting in a high-backed Italian chair; she wore a white dress, and a flat, black chip hat, tied under her chin. In her hands she had a bit of red clay, from which she was modelling a tiny statuette of a faun. She did not like posing, and had stipulated, in this picture, for something to do. Basil, accordingly, painted her looking down, musingly, under the shadow of the hat, at the faun. He had roughly sketched in the lower part of the figure, and was still working on the face.

"I shall call it 'The Girl and the Clay,'" he said. "You may be supposed to be 'making a poet out of a man'—though the ordinary thing would be to make a man out of a poet."

"A man is better than a poet," said Teresa lazily. "But I am only making a faun out of nothing."

"Out of nothing—out of nothing!" murmured Basil, studying his canvas with knitted brows. He laid down his sheaf of brushes and palette, and stretched his arms with a yawn. "You are making it out of red dirt and borrowed ideas. What so absurd as making a faun at this era of the world's history?"

"It is good enough for the handle of a paper-knife, anyway," said Teresa placidly.

"So inappropriate! What on earth has a faun got to do with cutting books?"

"I am making him with a leer, so that he will say, every time you look at him, 'What a fool you are to waste your time!' Of course, he is only to be used for cutting German philosophers. I think I'll engrave on the blade,

"'Grau, meine Freund, ist alle Theorie,
Und grün des Lebens goldne Baum.'"

"You're an immoral little wretch, with your fauns and sprites and pixies! What a day—o-oh!" And he stretched out his arms again with a groan.

"What's the matter with the day? It's a good day. You're lazy."

"No, it's the spring! Don't you feel it, cold one?"

"Yes, I feel it, but it doesn't make me yawn like a gryphon, and deliver myself of uncouth noises."

"Well, it does me. I'm an earth creature. I want to get out and roll in the grass—ow-woof! Let's go out in the country."

"All right!" said Teresa, springing up. "Anything to get out of this beastly posing. Now, remember, you stopped this of your own accord."

"So I did." Basil enveloped her in his arms and bit her neck. She cried out and pushed herself away from him.

"Basil! I'm sure that will leave a mark, and you know I'm going out to dinner to-night!" She fled to the mirror, and it reflected an angry countenance.

"No, it won't, and, if it does, it will only make you look nicer. There—forgive me, will you?—I didn't mean to hurt."

"You're so rough," sighed Teresa. She took off the chip hat, and began changing her dress. "Lock the door, will you? Some of your ladies might come bursting in."

"My ladies!" scoffed Basil.

He locked the door, and came back with some letters in his hand to hinder Teresa from dressing. To divert his attention, she snatched one of the letters—a fat grey envelope, addressed in a dashing hand.

"There—love letters again! I'm going to open it!"

"All right. But I thought we agreed not to read each other's letters? How pretty you are to-day, Teresa! I must paint you in a low dress —something blue—that white skin of yours, with the ivory undertone——"

Teresa had opened the grey envelope, and looked at the signature.

"Isabel Perry! Now, why should she write to you, Basil? You didn't tell me——"

"Don't know. I've never had a letter from her before. About the picture, I daresay."

"Picture! Eight pages about the picture! Shall I read it?"

"Oh, if you want to. But perhaps you might let me read it first, as it's addressed to me."

Basil was perfectly good-humoured and unembarrassed. He looked amused.

"No, I shall read it to you," said Teresa, sitting down half-dressed and glancing rapidly over the first pages. "The interesting parts, that is. There's a lot about the motor and the roads and the people—she pretends to be bored —'I sit with a veil over my face, and he sits beside me with goggles on, and he could not see me even if I had no veil and he no goggles'— *how silly! She's a* femme incomprise, *is she?* 'Can't tell you how many thousands of miles distant I feel from these people, stupefied by so

many hours' rushing through the fresh air, or by food and drink and their own physical well-being. . . . But, oh, the glory of the sea, the wind, the clouds. . . .' *She loves nature, does she?* . . . 'I've thought of you a good deal, and of our talks. You have the gift of making one say more than one means to say, but you understand so well that it makes it all right. Who taught you all you know about life? I am older than you, I've seen a good deal of the world, and yet you are so much surer than I, of yourself and of other people. I'm sure of nothing, except that I cannot go on as I am living now. I don't know what is before me, but already I feel as though I had left all this crowd of people that are despoiling me of my life far behind, as though I were flying along the road to freedom—Freedom! It may be only death. I'm in a machine that's beyond my control, and who knows what the next turn of the road may bring? Oh, God! if I could only give myself to something entirely worthy, if I could get away from this trivial self of mine. . . .'"

Teresa's voice faltered. She threw the letter down, and sat looking at the floor, her lips pouting with an injured expression. Basil was silent, and when she glanced up at him she saw that he looked uncomfortable. He took the letter, folded it, and put it in his pocket.

"Why does she write to you like that?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know. She's an expressive person."

"Expressive! She's hysterical. But you aren't her father-confessor, are you?"

"Don't be foolish, Teresa. Why shouldn't she talk or write to me, if she feels like it? She's an interesting woman, and she's unhappy."

"Of course she's unhappy. It's very easy for a woman who has a heap of money, good looks, and a kind husband to be unhappy. To be contented would be simply commonplace. It would prove that she had no soul at all. And, besides, what could she talk about to other men?"

Basil was grave. "She isn't a trivial woman," he said. "You don't understand that temperament, Teresa. She is really unworldly, she has a lot of energy which she can't put into ordinary channels——"

"Very well, but she needn't employ it on you!" Teresa got up and flung herself into his arms. "She is in love with you! That's what she means by 'something entirely worthy.' . . ."

"You little idiot! . . . What's the matter with you lately, Teresa? When did you get this idea that women fall in love with me? They don't! And even if they did, it wouldn't matter. You know perfectly well I never think of anyone but you."

She made no answer, but clung to him, and he

began coaxing her, with half-laughing, tender phrases that showed a distinct pleasure in her jealousy.

"I believe you put it on, simply to please me," he suggested.

"No!" she said passionately.

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In an hour they were in a train, going out through the smoky tunnel, and the bleak rectangular outskirts of the city, into the fields. The car was almost empty. They sat hand-in-hand. Teresa's face was full of light and colour; her narrow eyes gleamed joyously; she leaned against Basil's shoulder with a soft nestling of her pliant body. They opened the window as soon as they were out of the tunnel, and the spring air blew in upon them, mixed with cinders which nobody minded. Then came the smell of the sea. They got out at a smart suburban station and walked away from it, over a hill, through budding woods and newly turned fields and banks of green grass mixed with shelves of rock. The blue sky was dappled all over now with cloud-feathers that melted and formed anew every moment. Teresa sang:

"'Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,
Als alle Knospen sprangen,
Da ist in meinem Herzen
Die Liebe ausgegangen.

"'Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,
Als alle Vögel sangen,
Da hab' ich ihr gestanden
Mein Sehnen und Verlangen.'"

Their eyes met. The song was enwrapped with memories of the first days of their marriage. Heine had been the poet of their love.

They lunched gaily together at a little restaurant on the edge of a bay, a sort of roadhouse with a stuffy parlour and one slow waiter, like a winter-frozen fly, waiting for warm weather to unlimber. They were alone on the wide verandah overlooking the wet flats from which the tide was still receding; and they clasped hands and even kissed one another across the little table. After lunch they found a warm nook by the side of a rock in an old apple orchard. Before them were only silent fields and woods and the smooth blue Sound. The apple trees were in bloom, a mist of pink spread over the hillside, and white petals drifted down on the grass with every soft breath of wind. Teresa sat on the ground, leaning against the rock. Basil lay with his head in her lap, and his grey hat over his eyes. She hummed dreamily:

"*Es war ein König im Thule,*" and prevented him from going to sleep by teasing him with a feathery grass. She had taken off her hat; the

sun shone down on her through the pink blossoms; her eyes were as blue as the sea or sky, and expressed a wistful happiness.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Basil, looking up sleepily, and imprisoning her hand with the tormenting grass.

"Nothing very wise."

> *"'Que m'importe que tu sois sage?*
> *Sois belle, et sois triste!'"*

"Yes, but you don't like me when I'm *triste*."

"I like you any way, my child, any way—if only you'll talk to me, and tell me why and wherefore——"

"One can't talk all the time. It always makes me sad to be happy, for then you dread change, and everything changes."

"Dearest, would you like to go on as we are, then?"

"Yes, forever. I don't want anything more, nor anything less."

"You want whatever you have. You didn't want me till you got me! Life has to be forced on you—then you like it well enough!"

"But no more of it—I don't want any more. I'm afraid of you, you're so omnivorous! You're always wanting something new, always being interested in new people. Some day you'll be tired of me."

He laughed. "It's much more apt to be the

other way round. I'm surer than you are. I lived for thirty years in the world before I saw you, and never saw another woman that I wanted for more than a moment. When I saw you I knew I wanted you forever. But you didn't want me."

"I want you now, though! And I don't want anyone else to have even a thought of you—I hate to think that some women have memories of you. I don't like it that women write to you, and tell you their secrets——"

She broke off suddenly and laughed.

"What an idiot I'm getting to be! You hardly know me, do you? What would my Aunt Sophy say if she could hear me? . . . No, I know what I said is absurd, from any reasonable point of view. And I am reasonable, you know. And so I admit that I'm glad I married an attractive man, and that it's necessary other women should be more or less interested in him, and he in them. I don't want to be a jealous idiot. I want you to be perfectly free. I like you partly because you know the world—it amuses me—your experience. I don't mind your peccadilloes one bit. . . ." Again she stopped for a moment.

"I know you don't," said Basil.

"Wait a bit—*do* you? Of course you prefer to think I don't, and *I* prefer to think I don't—so you bring your arguments to bear on my reason,

and I bring my reason to bear on your arguments, and we agree, and are as jolly as possible. . . . But there's another person in me that's quite different. You are responsible for that person—she never existed till you insisted that she should be—and she makes me very uncomfortable. She's responsible for my moods and silly jealousies of women that I know you don't care for. I am rational, but she is blind instinct. I know you belong to me, but she doubts it. I believe that even if another woman had a physical attraction for you, it wouldn't touch your feeling for me—but she would go wild at the thought of it. So look out for her. *I* am reasonable, as I said, but *she*——"

"What an imagination you have!" laughed Basil, and he kissed her wrist. "Are you trying to make me believe that there's primeval passion in you? I know better. You're the most charming creature in the world, one of the most intelligent, and deliciously pretty, and thoroughly civilised. I don't believe for a minute in this other person you describe. You will dramatise everything! You don't care enough about me to be jealous, even with good reason. I only wish you did."

"All right," said Teresa composedly. "Give me a cigarette. What a heavenly day! What a delightful world! I love you, Basil. I do think I'm one of the luckiest people alive."

IX

THEY got back to the city barely in time to dress for dinner. Basil dressed in twenty minutes, and then came into Teresa's room, handsome and smart, with his hat and coat on, and his watch in his hand. She was doing her hair; and it did not suit her, and had to be done over again.

"We ought to start in eight minutes," said Basil.

"All right. Go away now, that's a good boy, and don't bother," said Teresa easily.

Ten minutes passed and he returned. Teresa had just finished doing her hair. This time it suited her.

"Time to start," said Basil with a shade of vexation.

"Do go away! I'll be ready in three minutes, if you leave me alone," said Teresa sharply. "There's no use in being so beastly prompt. Nobody is."

"You know I hate being late," said Basil shortly, and went out.

Teresa had a new dress, blue and silver, which she had not even tried on. The belt was too loose, and had to be taken in hastily, and the

tulle about the décolletage had to be adjusted. She rang for Mary to hook the dress, and Basil came and glowered in the doorway.

"You do fidget me so," snapped Teresa.

"Well, why in thunder can't you get ready on time? You drive me wild!"

"That's right—spoil my evening."

"You spoil mine. I hate to go out with you."

Teresa did not reply, but surveyed herself in the mirror. The perception that she was looking extremely well helped to calm her. She put on her gloves deliberately, slipped into her loose white coat, and swept out past Basil, who was blocking up the narrow hall. A cab was waiting for them below, and Teresa half expected that Basil would say something about extravagance; they had had cabs three times this week. But he sat silent in his corner, and she in hers, watching the street lights spin past. The Blackleys lived uptown, and they had a drive of twenty minutes, and they were twenty minutes late. The other guests were assembled in the drawing-room of the tiny house, squeezed in between two taller houses, which Alice Blackley had decorated according to her own æsthetic ideas, and entirely without regard to her husband's. One of Alice's present fads was a sparing allowance of light. The drawing-room was lit only by the fire, and a few scattered candles. In the gloom Teresa could hardly make out who were

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the other people. Alice received her coldly. She was a tall, blonde woman, with a very pretty figure, and large, deer-like, rather vacant eyes. Dinner was instantly announced by the Japanese butler. Teresa was taken in by a man she liked—a young architect with a passion for philosophy.

She sat at the left of the host, a man of middle age, who liked to be jolly, but was usually handicapped. Opposite her was a woman of fifty, with the hard face of the society hack, a high collar of pearls and diamonds, a very low-cut gown, and an air of not knowing exactly where she found herself. Alice had this lady's husband at her right, and Basil at her left. Basil had taken in Mary Addams. Then there were two extra men, for Alice believed in a preponderance of the male element. The one opposite, next Mary Addams, Teresa knew she had seen somewhere; she gave him a bow and smile, and then recollected him—he was the Englishman whom Basil had brought home to that unlucky dinner. On her own side of the table, beyond Page, the architect, she caught a glimpse of an individual in an unstarched shirt-front and a large tie.

Talk burst out at once. The dining-room was gloomy—all done in peacock-blue, with no lights except those on the table, and two or three dull silver electric globes in the ceiling.

"It's Alice's idea of a summer night," mur-

mured Page to Teresa. "Tell me what's the idea of that dress she's got on."

It was a dress of black velvet, and over it Alice wore a robe of Chinese embroidery of gold and purple.

"That dress means," said Teresa in the same tone, "that this is an artistic dinner. It is not a formal dinner, nor a commonplace society affair, but a gathering of intellectual people. You and I and Basil are artistic, you know, Mary Addams has written poems, and I imagine this has been got up to amuse the guests of honour, for certainly *they* are not artistic. As for the other two, you must tell me who they are."

"Alice said there was to be an African lion, and I imagine that's he, over there. He doesn't look very fierce, does he?"

"I wish I knew his name. Basil brought him to dinner unexpectedly one day last week. There was nothing to eat, and my aunt talked Woman Suffrage to us. I hoped I should never see him again, but I can see from his look that he remembers that steak. Basil said he was something in the East. Perhaps that accounts for his curious colour. Where did Alice find him?"

"I don't know. She picks up all sorts of people abroad. Have you noticed this person on my left?"

"Vaguely. From the coast of Bohemia?"

"Yes, shipwrecked. A starving genius whom Alice has rescued. He writes prose poems, and recites them to music of his own, and he has written a whole series of dances for Alice. You'll see if we don't catch it after dinner!"

"And she is introducing him to the Kerrs! Now you see why we're here."

"I forgive him for existing. I pardon him for sitting next to me. I remit to him even the sins he's going to commit after dinner. I haven't seen you for months."

"No, you're too busy building neo-Renaissance houses for the newly rich. How's Alice's villa getting on?"

"Hush! She wants a waterfall in the middle of it."

"Well, you must get her one. I can't see why you should deny her a trifle like that."

At this point, Mrs. Kerr having found something to say to the Englishman, Mr. Blackley, turned to Teresa.

"Well, how is Art?" he enquired.

"You ought to know. You live in the very hot-bed of it," said Teresa. "You raise it under glass."

He cast a glance about the room, and lowered his voice, taking Page into the talk by a look.

"Say, honestly, how d'ye like the house? I call it fierce—simply fierce. Of course, you know it's *her* house—a woman ought to have

her house as she likes it, for a man can always get out of it, you see. But, confound it, it does give me the blues. To go prowling round in this kind of a dim, religious light, breaking your shins against chairs and marble statues and things—and eating your food in a sort of Götterdämmmerung—that word expresses my feelings—why, you might as well be at a table-d'hôte, for all you know what you're eating. And then, there ain't a comfortable chair in the place—except on *my* floor. I say, you two come up there after dinner, and I'll show you what's *my* idea of a room. I had to fight for that floor, too, I can tell you! Alice wanted to hang my bedroom with sea-green brocade and marquetry furniture. You can easily slip out, you know, for the drawing-room'll be pitch dark, except a circle of light where the fellow recites, and perhaps we could get Basil and Mary, too."

"I like that! Do you think you could steal away the audience and Alice not notice? Besides, I want to hear this wonderful person."

"Oh, no, you don't! Really, you don't. D'you know why all the lights are turned out when he recites? Because he's so terribly indecent that people are ashamed to look each other in the face. He *says* it's because genius won't flow if he has to look at his audience, but I know better. I go away when he begins—I can't stand him, 'pon my word. I'm a modest man. I say, hang

Art if it's got to be mixed up with indecency. What's your opinion, Teresa?"

"You are perfectly right. I shall put proper clothes on all the figures on that punch-bowl I'm making for you."

"Oh, I say! You know I don't mean that sort of thing! I'm not a prig. But—well, you wait till you hear him."

Teresa thought that the poet must certainly have heard some of these remarks, but he seemed absorbed in explaining to Alice and to Mr. Kerr, a gentleman of uncertain age and inexpressive countenance, something which required a great many gestures of unmanicured hands. She saw that Basil was having a good time with Mary Addams; he was laughing a good deal, drinking a good deal of excellent Burgundy; his eyes had the attentive and warm look called out by any woman he liked. There was more life and vigour in his handsome head than in all the others combined. Beside him Horace Blackley looked fat and commonplace, Page looked conventional, Mr. Kerr pallid and used, the poet greasy and theatrical, and the Englishman looked like a grave phantom—a phantom of distinction. Teresa could hardly believe that he was not an Eastern—she could imagine him with the white burnoose, the hood over his head, a typical Arab. She said as much to Page.

"Ah, you're right—I believe there is a drop

of black blood somewhere in him—Egyptian or something—and part of his success is due to the fact that he can pass as a native among the Arabs—like Burton, you know. He's governor of some district down in the desert. Good-looking chap."

"Tell me his name," said Teresa.

"Crayven—that's all I know of it."

Teresa judged his age to be about thirty-five, though in expression he looked older—looked, in fact, any age. His face, with all the fineness and delicacy of its lines, was strong. His forehead and eyes showed intellectual force; his eyes were frank and simple, it seemed to Teresa, on this second view, and his mouth gentle. He interested Teresa, partly because of the extreme quiet and repose of his manner. Whether he was talking to Mrs. Kerr or to Mary Addams, whom he seemed to find attractive, or listening, which he seemed to prefer, he suggested somehow a world different from this. Teresa's imagination was stirred by the few facts she had heard about him. A simpler, a less nervous life, more primitive and harsher externals, more space and freedom, might be his proper setting. She fancied she saw in his face, in spite of its gentleness, the habit of command. His grey-brown colour and the lines about his eyes made her think of the glare of sun on the desert.

Dinner was nearly over when for the first time

the conversation became more general. Basil, Mary Addams, Page, and the poet discussed the origin of Art. The poet maintained with vigour that all that was good in nature was due directly to art, that art came out of the vague, a creative force, and lifted nature from mere bestiality into the light of civilisation. Basil maintained the superior interest of nature and the imitative character of art, and the other two followed his lead. Soon the discussion ascended to metaphysical heights, and dealt with the philosophy of æsthetics. Mary dropped out, with a tolerant smile. Alice threw in a vague, irrelevant question now and then, and looked pleased; this was something really intellectual. Mrs. Kerr listened, and blinked with a faintly astonished air; Mr. Kerr and the host devoted themselves to game and currant jelly. The poet showed unexpected ability in dialectic; Basil and Page, who considered themselves philosophers, forgot the rest of the company. Crayven was silent, and turned his champagne-glass round and round with an abstracted look; he did not drink the champagne.

Teresa, rather tired of being talked across by Page and the poet, was studying Crayven's grave face, when, for the third time that evening, he interrupted her scrutiny by meeting it suddenly, with eyes in which now lurked a smile of irony and amusement. She smiled, too,

and felt with interest that philosophy probably bored him as much as it did her. He was a man of action. Nearly all the men she knew were men of talk.

She felt irritated with Alice when the men were left in the dining-room and the women rustled up stairs together; she saw no present reason for this arrangement. Dress was the topic of discussion, and over their coffee and cigarettes Mrs. Kerr and Alice talked eagerly about a new dressmaker, one of their acquaintances turned to business, who was more expensive than anything in Paris, and promised to be the rage. For the first time that evening a real interest lighted Alice's large eyes; she looked, as she rapturously described a toilette of purple velvet, almost like a sentient being. Teresa and Mary Addams exchanged an expressive glance, and Teresa was about to move her chair nearer to Mary's, with a view to escaping further boredom, when Crayven walked into the room alone.

"Will you send me back, please, if you don't want me?" he said to Alice with a deprecating smile.

"Of course, we want you—we're highly flattered," she assured him graciously, but looking a little put out.

He sat down by Teresa, and offered her a cigarette from his own case. Alice gave him a cup of coffee.

"Your own, and made according to directions," she said.

He tasted it, smiled, shook his head, and put it down.

"It tastes like the ordinary bean of commerce," he said. "You won't taste real coffee till you come to Arabia."

"I shall come next year," Alice assured him. "It will be the most amusing thing I ever did. Four days on a camel, straight into the desert—and an old fort to live in, with a powder-magazine under the drawing-room——!"

"We don't call it a drawing-room," said Crayven gravely. "And you won't be able to bring many boxes, you know."

"I shall come with one saddlebag, and then I shall dress like a native woman while I'm there," said Alice with interest.

"*Voici que devant lui s'arreta une femme enveloppée de son ample voile en étoffe de Moussoul, en soie parsemée de paillettes d'or et doublées de brocart. Elle souleva un peu son petit voile de visage, et, d'en dessous, alors, apparurent des yeux noirs avec de longs cils et quelles paupières!*" murmured Teresa.

"Ah, what's that?" asked Crayven, looking at her intently.

"The Thousand and One Nights."

"Ah, yes, I remember Burton. But those are town Arabs, you know—a very different thing

from the Bedouins. You won't find any veils of brocade in my part of the desert!"

"There are some Bedouin stories, too—some of the time of the Prophet."

"I'd forgotten that. I'd like to see those—must look it up again."

He addressed himself particularly to Teresa, and now, smoking silently, seemed to expect her to say something more.

"Did you enjoy your play the other night?" she asked idly.

"Oh—no. I hate the theatre. I didn't come to America to go to the theatre."

"What did you come for, then?" she enquired.

"I came for some big game shooting. I'm going on to the Rocky Mountains next Wednesday. I've got two months clear to spend in the open."

"But don't you live in the open—down there?" Teresa's ideas of Eastern geography were vague.

"It's rather a different thing! . . . When I get out of the desert I like to change—though I always want to get back there. I make for the mountains when I do go away."

"And you've wasted ten whole days or more in New York!"

"Yes—rather wasted. . . . May I come and see you before I go—say to-morrow afternoon?"

She nodded, with some amusement. In a few moments the other men came in—Page and Basil last, with their arms on one another's shoulders, and still mumbling the remnants of their argument. But now it was the poet's hour. The candles were collected about the piano; and while the audience sat in darkness, the poet, throwing back his head in the attitude of Beata Beatrix, received what light there was on his pale countenance and half-closed eyes; and, touching the keys lightly, he chanted a mysterious poem on Slumber. Horace Blackley had slipped out when the piano began; and through the curtains he beckoned appealingly to Teresa and to Page, who sat near her. But he was obliged to stay alone. Teresa became slightly interested in the poem. It was indecent, but it was not commonplace. When its last sigh had died away, without waiting for comment, the poet struck several far-reaching chords, and glanced at Alice. She rose and came forward to the edge of the circle of candle-light. The poet played some unheard-of music, and Alice danced, or rather posed, lifting and swaying her arms, which emerged bare from the falling sleeves of the gold robe. The purpose of the robe now became apparent. Her face in shadow was barely seen, and it was at all times her least interesting point; but her beautiful figure, straight and lithe of line, expressed itself marvellously under the shimmer of the embroid-

ery. The spectators were one and all intent. Teresa glanced round, and saw eyes gleaming with sudden wakefulness. Even Mr. Kerr was awake. Page leaned forward.

"By Jove, you know, they really *have* struck something—they really have!" he whispered, his gaze on the swaying figure. Crayven said nothing, but she thought she saw a faint smile on his lips. Basil sat nearest to the dancer; his face was more lit up. It was animated by the wine he had drunk, by energetic talk; and now by a decided feeling for the plastic figure before him. Teresa watched him, forgetting the others.

X

IN the carriage, going home, Basil—entirely forgetting that his evening had been spoiled—put his arm about his wife, and kissed her with a warmth which she discouraged mildly.

"Did you enjoy it?" she asked.

"Oh, fairly. I liked the food—and the wine——"

"And Mary."

"I always like Mary. She's uncommonly amusing."

"She's more so since she got rid of Jack."

"Perhaps she isn't rid of him. Remember what we saw in the restaurant. Perhaps she likes him as a lover, though she didn't as a husband—eh?"

"You're wicked. So is she, rather. That's why you like her. I thought you seemed interested in Alice."

"Alice is interesting so long as she doesn't talk. She did that dance, or whatever you call it, well. That's the latest fad, I suppose. I'd like to paint her in that gold thing."

"Do—she'd be charmed. So long as someone will look at her she's happy."

"You're a little waspish, ain't you?" said Basil with amusement and another kiss.

"I was bored."

"I thought you were having a good time with Page."

"He's amusing, but not interesting. But Alice always puts the most interesting man where I can't talk to him."

"Oh, does she? Who was the interesting man to-night—the poet?"

"Poet! The rude Englishman, of course."

"Rude, was he? I thought he was gallant. He bolted off after you in no time."

"He was bored by your silly metaphysics. I kept thinking all the time you and Page were arguing, about Goethe's picture of the metaphysician—an ass led round by the nose in the midst of a barren plot of ground, while all round him are green fields that he never sees!"

"You flatter us. But where were the green fields to-night? Is Crayven a green field?"

"Not exactly. But something out-of-doors—natural and primitive."

"Hello, you've fallen in love with him! Any man is natural and primitive. The difficulty is to be anything else. But I can tell you, Crayven isn't primitive—he's only limited."

"I thought you liked him."

"No, not much. He's rather dry."

"He hasn't a free-flowing temperament, and doesn't like either whisky or philosophy—is that what you mean?"

"You're satirical. You *are* in love with him, aren't you?"

"He's coming to see me to-morrow. Then I shall decide whether I am or not."

"Better hurry a bit, for he's off to the wilds in a few days, to shoot something. Who was it said that if an Englishman saw an angel his first impulse would be to shoot it?"

"And yours would be to give it a drink, and get it to pose. . . . Basil, you don't tell me everything, do you?"

"Everything—you know I do. Why do you say that?"

"Because—I had an idea to-night, watching you. You know you told me about—a person—before we were married—a married woman. . . . Was it Mary?"

"No! What an idea—why on earth——?"

"You wouldn't tell me if it was Mary, would you?"

"No, I wouldn't. But it wasn't. I've told you, it wasn't anyone you know."

"Yes, but if it were somebody I knew, you'd lie about it, wouldn't you?"

"I don't lie to you, Teresa."

"You *would,* in such a case. You wouldn't betray the other woman. . . . So how can I know you aren't lying now?"

Basil gave an exasperated groan.

"I thought we'd settled all that! What earthly difference does it make to you, Teresa——"

"Oh, well, it does, that's all. I hate that woman. You know you did love her."

"I didn't, and she didn't love me. I liked her—she was clever and amusing, and she was unhappy with her husband——"

Teresa swayed into her corner of the carriage and shut her eyes.

"Don't talk about such things, dearest," implored Basil with a certain sad humility. "There's nothing that really matters to us, you know——"

"There's nothing perfect in this world," said Teresa, in a strange, quiet voice. "Not even our—not even love."

"Dearest!" he cried, and leaned toward her—but she repelled him gently.

They were silent for the few minutes that remained of their drive. . . .

In the little drawing-room the windows were open, and the curtains swayed in a warm breeze. Teresa took off her coat, and lay down in the long chair, and Basil walked about the room, smoking nervously.

"Don't you want to go to bed—aren't you tired?" he asked.

"No, I'm not sleepy," she answered absently. Her face, her half-closed eyes, were sad; and she

had the cold aloof look that Basil dreaded. He came presently, and sat on the floor at her side, laying his head against her shoulder.

"Do you hate me?" he asked.

"Sometimes I hate all men."

"Oh, Teresa, you don't. That sounds like your aunt."

"Perhaps my aunt is right. I hate self-indulgent, sensual, self-satisfied men. I hate comfortable men—and you all try to be as much that as you can."

"Why shouldn't we be as comfortable as we can—if it hurts nobody else? I don't understand you. I thought you believed in enjoying life in all possible ways. You——"

"No, it's disgusting! Disgusting to have appetites, and coddle them as tenderly as if they were your children! It makes a man a ridiculous spectacle. I wish I knew one man who didn't care for physical pleasures—I wish I knew a good priest, or some man who was ascetic by choice, who lived hard, and worked hard—who had something besides himself to think about."

Basil raised his head, and looked at her in surprise. After a moment he said:

"There are plenty of men who live hard, and work hard—but generally because they *must*—in which case it's no virtue. As for the few who do it when they needn't, it's because they have

some idea or some cause that possesses them—or some person——"

"Yes, if I only knew some one with a cause—some prophet or other——"

"All prophets are very sensual. Look at Mahomet—Brigham Young——"

"Oh, be quiet!"

"But it's true!" said Basil, kissing her hand and laughing. "So don't run off after the first prophet you see. There are lots of them. But all of them, and all the great poets and philosophers of the world——"

"Yes, yes, I've heard all that. Spiritual life, intellectual life, is only another form of self-indulgence. I'm tired of you."

"You *are* tired, dearest. Go to bed, won't you?"

"No, I won't. . . . Sometimes I wish you had something of that in you, Basil. . . ."

"Something of what, dearest one?"

"Oh, something of—the mystic, the prophet! . . . You are all so clear, so defined, so—worldly. Not worldly in a small sense, but worldly all the same. But . . . if you were a prophet, I suppose you wouldn't be as nice to live with as you are now, perhaps."

"No—*you're* not ascetic, my girl! You wouldn't want to tread the thorny path of self-mortification, prophet or no prophet."

"Who knows?"

"*I* know! If there ever was a self-indulgent person, it's you! What's got into you this evening, Teresa? You talk a little bit like Mrs. Perry—and you're not a bit like her——"

"I should hope not," said Teresa with contempt.

She drew her hand away from Basil, in sudden irritation.

"How nasty of you to say that! Go away, and leave me alone, will you?"

"Oh, don't be cross, dearest, I didn't mean——"

Teresa crossed her hands under her head and closed her eyes wearily. After a moment Basil got up and touched the bell. Its sharp trill could be heard distinctly from the region of the kitchen.

"What do you want? It's Mary's night out."

"I want some whisky and water. It seems to me it's always Mary's night out. Does she stay out all night?"

"I think she does. She has a key."

"I suppose she goes on a bat, then."

"Very likely. Why shouldn't she, poor thing, messing over horrid pots and pans all the week. I hope she does. She works hard enough for it—and she supports her family out of us, most admirably."

"She does—on her wages?"

"Yes—and incidentals."

"Incidentals? Do you mean she steals from us?"

"Of course she does. A little sugar here, a little tea there, a half-pound of chops—to cheer up her poor old mother."

"Well, look here, I didn't know that. You oughtn't to let her do it!"

"Why not? We can afford it. Property is theft anyhow. I'll get you your whisky—though really you've had enough."

Teresa went quickly out of the room, to avoid discussion, and brought back the decanters and two glasses.

"I'll take a little, too, just to make you happy," she said, smiling.

"Well, look here, about Mary——"

"Oh, bother Mary. Let's talk about ourselves. I forgive you for everything."

"Do you—honestly?" He was won instantly away from the theme of Mary. And he was used to Teresa's jumps.

"Yes. I don't really blame you, you know. I think you're a sweet, dear thing, and very good to me. And I don't want you different at all from what you are. Only don't make me jealous."

"Jealous—you! It isn't in you."

"Oh, isn't it! Don't try it, that's all. I don't mind other women liking you—only don't you like *them!*"

"I couldn't. You're just the one and only. You combine everything I like—if only you liked me a little more!"

"I love you. . . . Did I look pretty to-night?"

"Charming, dearest. That dress is very nice—is it new?"

"Yes—Nina sent it to me from Rome. It cost a pretty penny!"

"You are a nice person to talk about self-indulgence! When did you deny yourself anything you wanted?"

"Never, if I could get it. But I admire it in other people."

"I daresay!"

"It pleases my æsthetic sense. It has beauty in it. Most people are so smug. I like hungry people."

"That's the reason you liked me, then—because I was starving for you."

She kissed him tenderly.

"Not for me, but for something beautiful that you mistook me for! I'm glad you mistook me."

"I didn't—I just took you."

She smiled. All the weariness was gone now from her look. She looked young and joyous. She went to a mirror and admired herself in the blue and silver dress.

"Yes, I *am* pretty," she said confidingly. "I like the dress—it makes my eyes look bluer. Can

you unhook it, do you think? Because if not, I shall have to sleep in it."

"I can try," said Basil, manfully.

"Fraud! As if you hadn't had enough practice. . . .

He looked into the mirror over her shoulder. Their eyes met, and they both laughed gaily.

XI

TERESA'S life was full, and, on the whole, free and happy. She desired nothing more for herself, except that it should not change. Her occasional clouded moods were due, if not to some temporary and slight disagreement with Basil, in which she usually by insistence got the best of him, then to a vague perception of forces within and without that menaced her happiness of careless youth and love. She saw that she herself changed, that her love and need of Basil deepened. She saw that he changed—that he became more tranquil toward her, and more interested in the play of life outside than he had been during his year of absorption in her. And this shifting of the balance frightened her. If she should come to need him more than he needed her, it would destroy their first relation, in which he had given to her out of a free abundance of life and joy, and she to him calmly, tenderly, and with a smile on her lips, and in her heart. And this change, too, would destroy her own poise, and leave her at the mercy of chance or fate, in a dependence on Basil which she obscurely dreaded when she thought of it.

The tragedy of life she felt all about her, like the great humming city; only so far it had not

touched her nearly. Since her marriage, the most tragic thing in her world had been Gerald Dallas. Dallas had given her his best—affection, admiration, and a delicate tact and sympathy for her moods invariable, except on the rare occasions—not more than three—when she had seen him in the toils of his slavery. He had a feeling for Teresa which perhaps a more respectable man could not have had. Teresa knew that poor Gerald was disreputable; that he lived with a ballet-dancer; that he had undoubtedly seen his only good days, and was steadily going down hill. He would end perhaps as one of those beery, dirty old men that haunt the edge of the city streets, wreckage cast off by the whirling machinery. Teresa had not remonstrated with him since the early days of their friendship. Once, when she had begged Basil to try to stop him, she had been answered in the words of Confucius: "Reprove your friend once and twice, but if he does not heed you, stop. Do not disgrace yourself." And she had come to feel that Basil was right, that nothing could be done. There was no spring of regeneration in the man. At forty he had lived his life, and all but burnt himself out. He did not talk about himself to Teresa; and it was one of his charms for her. The men she saw most of—mainly artists in one way or another, or detached philosophers—were all bent, first on amusing, and secondly on ana-

lysing themselves. Many of them had reached the age when the second mode of pleasure outweighs the first. They experienced only in order to contemplate their experience and themselves. Teresa had a way of listening, and asking intelligent questions. None of her acquaintances needed much coaxing. Soon or late all blossomed into anecdote, narrative, and reflections on their lives. Some were clever men. But Teresa, when she repeated what they said to Basil, often made them appear irresistibly comic; and Basil, between roars of laughter, would add details discreetly omitted by the autobiographer. Teresa, listening to these foot-notes with drooping eyelids and contemptuous lips, said sometimes:

"I could never fall in love with a man that you knew well!"

"I don't do it on purpose!" he had replied with a joyous shout. "Only I like to tell you things!"

It was Basil who had told Teresa about the ballet-dancer. Gerald never talked about himself or his affairs to her. He appeared as much bored by all that related to himself as he was interested in all that concerned her. On the occasions when he buried himself in obscurity, she missed him, and thought much about him.

* * * * *

The morning after Alice's dinner, word came

from Gerald, after a long silence. He was ill in a public hospital, and asked Basil to come to him. Basil was not at home; Teresa read the note, and, as she was going out, took it herself to the studio. She found Basil hard at work with a model. But he at once dismissed the girl, changed his coat, and departed, promising to come back in an hour at most and report to Teresa. . . .

The day was hot. The smell of paint and turpentine in the studio was stronger than the now fading lilacs. The room looked disorderly, cumbered by a sort of scaffolding on which the model had been posing, and by various draperies flung on chairs. Teresa looked at the cartoon which Basil was making for a decorative panel. The model came out, dressed, and with a slight salutation to Teresa, went away. She was a tall girl, with an ordinary face, and rough skin, but a pretty figure. When she had closed the door behind her the studio was silent, except for the echoes of steps in the corridors, or a voice uplifted in some neighbouring room, or a faint whistling farther off. The building was a hive of desultory business, sheltering many attempts to produce the Beautiful. Teresa called it "the factory."

She sat down, took her little clay statuette of the faun out of its moist wrappings, and began working on it languidly. Her corner was the

most attractive part of the room. It was partly shut off by a carved screen, and had cushioned chairs of green wicker, and a table with a tea-service, and a low pedestal with a vase of flowers. The flowers were fading. Bought, like the lilacs, in the city streets, they had lasted but a day. Teresa frowned as she noticed their faint, sickly odour, and rose to set them away. She had rolled up the sleeves of her thin, white blouse, but had not taken off her hat. Her head drooped as she took up her work again, and she sighed, and paused to look at herself in a mirror. Under the shadow of the black hat her eyes looked back at her with a strange melancholy and uneasiness. After a moment her face looked to her like that of a stranger, some woman oppressed and sad, and this impression frightened her. She turned away abruptly, and began with a little tool to model the faun's thick neck and shaggy shoulder. He seemed a trivial creature, as she handled him; Basil's cartoon, reflected in the mirror, appeared to her meaningless and absurd. The air of the studio, of the building, of the whole city, seemed stale and oppressive. She thought of the woods, of the sea, and a desire to go far away, away from Basil, from everything, came upon her. She was tired, and a thought, a fear, a possibility, lay heavy on her heart. It had come to her in the night, and she had not slept.

There was a knock at the door. Teresa called,

"Come in," but apparently was not heard. After a moment the knock was repeated, sharply, and she went to open the door impatiently. A woman stood there, with a long, light cloak over her dress, and a white veil tied over a small hat, but not covering her face.

"Isn't Mr. Ransome here?" she asked in a quick, decided voice, inclining her head slightly.

"No. He may be back in half an hour. Won't you come in?"

"Just a minute. I don't think I'll wait." She walked in, and said with a smile: "You're Mrs. Ransome. I know you from your pictures here, and perhaps you know me?"

"Yes," said Teresa, also smiling, as she shut the door.

"You've seen my portrait—how do you like it?"

She was looking about for the picture as she spoke. Teresa looked at her earnestly. The white veil, drawn across the brow and tied under the chin, framed her face like a nun's garb. Her dark eyes were piercing and impatient under their straight-scored brows. Her complexion suffered from the white frame.

"I thought it very interesting—before I had seen you," said Teresa slowly.

"Ah, you can't tell with this thing on—wait." She untied the veil, and took off her hat, showing black hair, thick about her low forehead, and

parted in the middle, and beautiful modelling about the chin and throat. "Now, what do you think?"

"As I remember the picture, the likeness is there," said Teresa. "But it looks older than you do—and sadder. Basil's portraits are almost always like that—what the person will be like in ten years, say—the character accentuated, the lines sharper—I reproach him for it," she added smiling. "It would be better to paint a pretty woman as she is, don't you think so?"

Mrs. Perry had listened with interest, her big, dark eyes fixed on Teresa.

"I don't know—perhaps his way is more an interpretation," she said abruptly. "It is interesting, at least. Anyone almost can paint a pretty woman, but to see what she *is*——"

"He only paints what he sees, of course—only he sees, perhaps, what isn't there!"

"No, it's all there—all that may be, all that we must be—we must grow old—and sad! I wish we could see the picture."

Teresa waved a doubtful hand toward the rows of canvases stacked face inward against the wall.

"We might try," she suggested.

"No—I won't wait. And, besides, you're busy. I'm—no, I'm not sorry I interrupted you, for I'm very glad to have seen you," she said with a quick smile, as she went to the mirror to put on

her hat and veil. "I know you work here sometimes—Mr. Ramsome showed me some of your work—I thought it extremely good. I wonder when I could come to sit again—I'm most anxious to get on with the portrait. Do you think Mr. Ransome would like me to come to-morrow?"

"I think he would."

"Well, then, would you tell him that I'll come at half-past three, unless I hear from him? Thank you. And I wonder—would you both come and dine with me one day this week? Do—let us say Thursday—at eight? I would come to see you before, but I shall be out in the country almost every day, looking after a house I'm building. Good-bye—till Thursday, then."

She put out her hand, but Teresa smilingly showed her own, moist from the clay. With a nod, Mrs. Perry rustled out of the studio. A perfume of iris lingered in the dead air.

Basil came back a few minutes later, grave and worried. He flung his hat down and shook his shoulders with a familiar impatient gesture. His mouth and jaw had settled into the dragging look of despondency, which showed the weight laid on his spirit.

"Well?" said Teresa sharply, wrapping up the clay faun again.

"Pneumonia. He was picked up somewhere and taken to the hospital four days ago. The

crisis came night before last. He'll get well, they think, though he had a narrow shave—the whisky nearly did for him. I found him in the common ward. He wanted me to get him a private room, and send a letter to—his place—and so on. I arranged it."

"How is he now?" asked Teresa, after a pause, during which Basil tramped sombrely up and down the room.

"Oh, he looks like the devil. A wreck. It would have been better for him if he'd played out for good, I'm afraid."

"You men are rather hard on one another—and for the same sort of thing that you all do, more or less."

"Yes, but it's the more or less. With the less a man can get on, but with the more he goes to the wall—and perhaps the sooner the better."

Basil's face somewhat belied the hardness of his words, and showed how deeply he had been disturbed. Teresa was silent for some moments, then she told him of Mrs. Perry's visit. He brightened.

"Oh, I'm glad she's back. I want to get on with the portrait—I believe it's pretty good. To-morrow afternoon, she said?"

"Yes, but—I wanted you to-morrow afternoon."

"What for?"

"I want you to take me into the country. I

want to go now, this morning, and stay several days. I must get away somewhere."

"Why—what's the matter?—oh!" A shadow came over his face, his eyes softened into tenderness.

"You're still worrying?" he said gently, and came and knelt beside her chair.

"I want to go away," repeated Teresa, her eyes cast down, pulling on her gloves nervously. "Let us go to that little place where we lunched the other day, and stay two or three days—will you?"

"Of course I will—anything in the world you want, dearest."

"And by that time I shall know, I suppose, and——"

"No, no, don't worry about it. I don't believe it is that. Come—we can catch the twelve o'clock train, and be out there in time for lunch."

"We must stop and tell Mary, and get a bag or so. We can't exactly go without anything."

"They'd take us for a runaway couple—wouldn't that amuse you?"

"I don't believe anything would amuse me just now. You don't mind running away from Mrs. Perry?"

"Oh, hang Mrs. Perry! I'll write her not to come."

He sat down at his table and scratched off a

note, Teresa looking over his shoulder; then caught up his hat and hurried Teresa away, locking the door behind him.

.

It was a moonlight night, and they took a boat and rowed about the smooth bay. Teresa was silent. Once she began to sing Schubert's "Water Song," but the light music faltered and died; and she sang instead the "*König im Thule,*" sang it dreamily and mysteriously; then the marvellous plaint of Gretchen's disturbed heart for the absent Faust. And then, "*Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,*" and here she broke down and cried passionately:

"Oh, we have only had a year!"

Basil shipped his oars, and moved nearer her in the rocking boat.

"Upset it, and let us both drown!" she cried.

"Dearest—my sweetheart—don't be a blazing idiot—you're cold, you're shivering—we'll go in, and I'll comfort you, my own——"

"I never wanted to marry you anyway," she cried.

"But you did. Wrap that coat round you, you foolish girl."

He bent to the oars and sent the boat leaping along the track of the moon toward the pier. In a few moments they were in their room at the inn, and Basil made Teresa drink half a wine-glass of brandy. He wrapped her in blankets,

and held her in his arms, kissing her temple, her hair, her cheeks. She kept her eyes hidden.

"I hate you," she murmured once softly.

"Do you, dearest?" he said, a little drearily.

Then her arms went round his neck, and she laid her wet cheek to his.

"No, not you, but life. I only wanted to be left alone. I was so happy with you. And now all will be different, if this is true—we can never be the same. And I shall be ugly, and you will stop caring for me——"

"I shall love you more than ever. I didn't think it possible, but I shall. You're not sorry you married me, are you?"

"'*Que le bonheur passe vite, mon Dieu, qu'il passe vite, et quant on souffre en y pensant plus tard!*'" murmured Teresa.

"Don't, you silly child. Be brave, Teresa; you won't regret in the end——"

"How do you know? I don't want to be brave, I want to be happy. I don't want responsibilities, I don't want to be tied down—I want nothing but *you*. I hate babies."

"You won't, if you have one of your own. It will be better for you in the end, for us both, for our relation. I'm sure it will—it's natural and right——"

"Don't preach. I don't *want* it."

"You don't want anything till you get it. You didn't want me, but you're not sorry, are you?"

"No—the queer thing is, that, in spite of everything, I'm not sorry. I've always been glad, every moment, that I married you, even when I disliked you most."

"Yet you refused me seven times. So you see! You don't know what you want. Take what life gives you, Teresa; take it with both hands, don't be afraid. Drink deep, even if you suffer. Life—that's the main thing—it's more life you need, not less."

She looked into his eyes, where the flame of life indeed glowed keen and strong; and she clung to him, with the first feeling that his strength might protect her, with the first conscious yielding to it. She lay looking at him curiously.

"I believe you're glad," she said suddenly.

"I should be, if you were not unhappy," he answered, and looked almost shamefaced.

"It's odd that, though you're fond of me, you don't mind my suffering, or even that I might die. Remember your mother, she——"

"Oh, don't! oh, don't!" he cried. "I couldn't live without you."

The tears rolled down his cheeks; and then Teresa, as always when she had moved him, became gentle, coaxing, and gay.

"Never mind what I say, I have no intention of dying. You won't have to live without me, but with me, and I warn you, that may be even

more difficult. I shall be as nasty as possible; I shall worry the life out of you. You poor old creature, you'll rue the day that you asked me for the eighth time! I gave you seven chances of happiness, and you refused them. Now, you're bound, and this—*this*—settles it. You can never get away from me, nor I from you. . . . I always liked to think, you know, that we were both free, and neither needed to put up with the other a day longer than we both wanted. But *now* we're both going to be slaves. Oh, you'll see, you'll see! I tell you our youth is over. Now we pass under the yoke. *This* is the real yoke, not marriage. Oh, you'll regret it, when you see me fat and ugly, my figure gone, my good temper gone——"

"My slim mermaid!"

"Mermaid! I shall look like this!"

She made a caricature with the blankets. Then she stretched out her arms and looked down at her long slim body sadly.

"Good-bye to my beauty," she murmured. "You will need to love me, to make up for it! But when it's gone, perhaps you won't—love me any more."

"Is it for that only that I love you? You're the love of my soul, too." And he caught her in a passionate, sad embrace.

PART II

I

WITH the first cold days of autumn, the Ransomes were settled again in town. Teresa brought back from a long lazy summer in the country blooming health and content. Peace of soul and body had wrapped her round. A calm like that of summer nature itself had grown upon her, after the troubled and passionate spring. She was conscious of withdrawing herself from all that could disturb her, of retreating within herself, gathering her forces, mental and physical, for her solitary ordeal.

One day soon after her return Alice Blackley came to see her, fresh from the sea and a summer at St. Moritz, elaborately dressed, and ready to condole.

"You're looking well, though—really well," she said. "How do you manage it? Most women look such frights. And that dress is clever. Why, actually you look—perfectly presentable!"

And she examined curiously Teresa's long sweeping dress of dark violet crêpe, pleated in innumerable narrow folds, flowing out from the square-cut neck to the hem. Teresa smiled.

"I should never dare, myself," said Alice.

"Why not?"

"Oh, a thousand reasons. First, I might lose my figure. Then think of the frightful bother of it all—babies do upset a house so. Then, I should be afraid—terribly afraid. To think what women go through! I don't see how they can do it, unless they want a child most awfully, and I know some do. But I don't. Aren't you afraid, Teresa?"

"I don't think about it," said Teresa dreamily.

"But how can you help it? And you know you can't get away from it, and it comes nearer every day——"

"The sooner it will be over. It's all in the day's work."

"But one *needn't,* you know, unless one likes. And I could never make up my mind to it. Think of the responsibility! To call another human being into this world by our own will, perhaps to suffer——"

Teresa looked at Alice's pretty, empty face and large, inquisitive, stupid eyes.

"Perhaps it isn't by our own will—perhaps it's something bigger," she said, as though to herself.

"Oh, Teresa, you are not religious——!"

"No, but—the world is vast and—mysterious. It has been going on such a long time, think, and always in the same way! Who is any one of us, after all, to set herself against the cur-

rent of things? It's easier to go with the tide —to let one's self go——"

Teresa stretched out her arms with a vague, sensuous gesture and sighed.

"I can't understand it," said Alice. "Is Basil pleased?"

"I believe he is."

"Of course. There's more paternal instinct than maternal, I think, and no wonder, as they've none of the bother of it. I believe Horace would like to have fifty children, if he'd married somebody else. But he knows I won't. . . . What shall you do all this winter to amuse yourself, Teresa? Shan't you be awfully bored?"

"Perhaps. People will come and see me, I suppose. And I shall do some work—little things. I began a bust of Basil, but that must wait, now, till afterwards."

"Well, I'm glad to see you so happy about it. I shall send you something pretty for the baby. And you'll come and dine with us soon, won't you—just ourselves? Give my love to Basil. Has he been working?"

"Oh, yes. He's doing some panels now for a bungalow that Mrs. Perry's building down on her Long Island place."

Alice looked suddenly interested.

"Bungalow? But I thought she was building a big house in stone."

"Yes, but the bungalow is a bachelors' house near the main one. She has big crowds staying with her always."

"And what is it like—the bungalow?"

"Decorations all American Indian—Navajo blankets, pottery, baskets, what not—and half a dozen panels, landscapes, old Indian hunting-grounds."

"Have you seen her place?"

"Yes, we've been there two or three times for a few days."

"Oh, you know her, too? Do you like her? I thought she was Basil's flame."

"I like her. Basil does, too, I imagine."

"And she likes him? Aren't you jealous? They say she's fascinating. I've just barely met her."

Teresa smiled. "I couldn't be jealous any more," she said. "All that seems so foolish, now."

"Then you were jealous? . . . I wonder what it's like! I couldn't possibly be jealous of Horace, could I? But, of course, Basil's different. I don't think I should want a handsome man for a husband. Husbands ought to be useful. What's *hers* like?"

"Mrs. Perry's husband? Oh, he's useful, I suppose. He's a peevish man, with nervous prostration. He travels nearly all the time. He seems to be interested in nothing but his symp-

toms and archæology. He's writing a book on the Hittites. I believe he's a good banker, too."

"Well, I don't see what she has to complain of. I hear she's rather too gay. I should look after Basil, if I were you."

"No, you wouldn't," smiled Teresa.

This, too, Alice could not understand, and she went away, convinced that Teresa did not want the baby, and that she was profoundly jealous of Mrs. Perry, but dissembled out of pride.

When she had gone, Teresa began to walk up and down the room, sighing a little wearily. She moved with the pathetic clumsiness of a naturally graceful woman, slowly, the sombre dress rippling about her and hiding the lines of her body. Her head drooped as though owning the weight of her burden, yet its poise on the long throat had a touching dignity. She sighed, for she was beginning to feel the cramping conditions of the city, after her free and quiet summer. She did not like now to go out into the streets. She drove up every day to the Park, and walked there in quiet by-ways; but she missed her physical freedom, the exhilaration of quick motion, and the irresponsible gaiety of her former life. A touch of mysticism, new to her, helped her to feel that this experience must compensate for itself; and, in resigning her own clear individual preferences, in bowing to a necessity which seemed to lie in the life of love she had chosen,

she felt the breath of a wider, vaguer horizon. The world was greater to her, more terrible, but more inspiring, because of this force that compelled her, to which her will submitted. But joy had always lain for her in the free expression of her will and the sense of her own power; her submission could not be joyous. Her face was that of a pensive Madonna. Its outline was fuller, and the narrow eyes had lost their gaiety, their hint of wildness. She did not think much about the child to come. It had not begun to seem an entity to her until, lately, she had made some clothes for it. A queer feeling of tenderness for it woke in her as she sewed real lace about the necks of its tiny dresses, and mysterious tears fell on the muslin.

She was thinking now about a night, just before their return to town, when another feeling about the child had come to her. It was a bright moonlight night, and she was walking on the verandah of their cottage, facing a little inlet of the Sound that glittered restlessly as the tide came in and rocked the sailboat anchored some way from the land. Charles Page, the young architect, had come down to dine and spend the night, and he and Basil were in the living-room, smoking—Teresa now could not bear the smell of tobacco—and talking lazily, but interestedly. She glanced in now and then at them in the lamplight; they had forgotten her.

They were stretched out in two long chairs, the whisky decanter and a box of cigars near by. It was late; Teresa was supposed to have gone to bed; they were too busy talking to observe her silent passing outside. Now and then she heard a fragment of their talk—they were globe-trotting, and their reminiscences of youth and many lands were familiar echoes. Basil showed Page a Japanese pipe, a light dainty thing, such as the women smoke, and Teresa could see the words form on his lips, and the smile, and she could see the picture—the little pale woman, formal and soft, waking in the night, emptying the pipe with a few breaths, and laying it down——

And all at once the feeling had come to her: "He is one and I am another—I am forever outside, and he is a stranger to me, in spite of all. But *this,* this child of mine, is really mine. I shall understand it, it will comfort me, it will belong to me. I shall not need him so much." And the feeling had brought her a new peace, and the power to look at Basil more impersonally, to be grateful for his deep and real love of her, to think of him with almost maternal tenderness. The child, too, in time, would have needs that she could not satisfy, and live its life away from her—and yet it, too, she thought, would always love her.

But between her and Basil something had happened—the first weakening of the physical

bond that unites two who are necessary and sufficient to one another. She did not altogether realise it herself. She thought no more about it than she could help, but it saddened her, and touched the cup of physical suffering that she must drink with a strange bitterness. The cost of love was after all, perhaps, in proportion to its sweetness; but one paid, not for love, but for the awful physical force that moved the human world, for its blind, impersonal hunger, for its primeval riot——

So the world was made—so it must go on—and the tyranny of that necessity drove men like sheep. The will to live, of life conscious and unconscious, the physical instinct, cruel, wasteful, and careless—at times it seemed to her to make of human beings mere foolish puppets, without will or dignity. If this *was* the world, who would suffer to carry it on? Except that one must——

Was it possible that she, too, had been caught in the mesh spread for all, and that love, that had seemed all joy and lightness, was only a cynical bait, set to entangle one?

When such thoughts beset her, she wished that she were religious, that she might see spirit and meaning governing the world, instead of brute force; but she could not see it. Happily, her dark moods were rather rare.

Basil came in now before the shadow had

fairly settled upon her, and his caressing look and touch made her cheerful again. It was a point of pride with her that he should not feel her a burden, now that she was not going out. She liked him to go, and to come back and entertain her with accounts of his doings; and Basil readily adopted her own theory, that she was never bored with her own society. Now, as he dressed for dinner, she lay on his bed and talked to him; dictated what waistcoat he should wear, and tied his white tie. She told him of Alice's visit.

"Alice is an idiot," he said warmly. "She ought to have a baby herself. It's what she needs, only she doesn't know it, and I've told her so."

"You have a panacea for all feminine ills, haven't you?" said Teresa, with quiet sarcasm. "Marriage for those who aren't married, and babies for those who haven't babies——"

"That's right—that's what they all want, if they haven't got 'em."

"Then women are divided into two classes—those who have worries, and those who want them."

"Yes, and the last state is worse than the first."

"I wonder," said Teresa, stretching her arms wearily. "For me—I've always had more than I wanted."

"You're a lucky girl—don't put your arms up that way, dearest. You know——"

"Oh, be quiet, Basil! I'm so tired of having to think all the time about *it!*"

"Never mind, dearest, it won't be long, now." He came over to kiss her tenderly.

"Long? Ah, yes it will be—four long months, and then *that* at the end——"

"Dearest, dearest, I wish I could do it for you."

"Yes, you do, you old silly!"

"I do, honestly. I'd like to be a woman for a while—it must be a tremendous experience."

"I'm not sure that all brands of experience are desirable."

"Well, *you* are all the better for all you've had—more interesting, sweeter, more beautiful. You were always pretty, but now you're beautiful."

She smiled pensively.

"And now I must go on, or I shall be late. Good-night, my love. I wish you were going, too."

"Good-night. Don't make love to Mrs. Perry."

She held him close for a moment, kissed his eyelids gently, and let him go with a smile.

II

THE winter passed pleasantly enough for her. Plenty of people came to the house, and there were many of the little dinners she enjoyed, when two, three, or more men came in informally and talked of their own affairs, or those of the nation, with varying degrees of effectiveness.

Nearly all these men were of the sort that, as she said, "lived by their wits." They were civilised, sophisticated, a little hard, living the rapid life of the city; and few of them had reached the age of forty, at which the pace would begin to tell against them. She liked their free speech, and the reflection of their intense and interested lives. Erhart came often, and rather bored her by his large and massive egotism; he did not fit in well with the others. He was, Basil said, too purely the artist type. Gerald Dallas came back, looking much older, quieter than ever, with more than his old devotion. Teresa was for him, she felt, not merely an attractive woman engaged in the laudable but disabling work of child-bearing; she was an individuality which, once for all, had taken its place among the great facts of his life. His feeling for her was above any accident of her

own life, or his. He never spoke of it, but in every other way he showed how important she was to him. The quiet hours they spent together were consoling to Teresa. Gerald's deep melancholy was like the effect of an autumn evening, of rainy woods, dark gliding streams, and the dull sunset gleam of defeat. He was a beaten man, but in many moods his sadness was more congenial to Teresa than Basil's buoyant optimism. Deep within her was a conviction that life, if it must be taken seriously, was a desperate business. Gerald seemed to her to fail not ignobly, for he at least had vision. He was one of the few people whom she could imagine existing after death. The world had obviously no use for him, but if there could conceivably be a better world, she thought Gerald suited to inhabit it. As a frivolous expression of this idea she modelled one day a little statuette of him, with wings, a halo round his bald forehead and a harp in his hand, which made him merry, for the first time since his illness.

.

On an evening when February was melting into March in a wild storm of snow, sleet, and wind, Basil came in just before dinner and found Teresa standing by the window. She turned a ghostly face upon him.

"The baby is going to be born to-night," she said. "I've sent for the doctor and the nurse."

Basil turned as white as she, and looked much more terrified.

"When did you telephone?—perhaps you're mistaken?—what time did it begin?—why doesn't he come?" he cried. "I'll telephone again."

He did so, but the specialist was out, and wouldn't be in for an hour. Basil paced the flat in an agony of nervous helplessness. Teresa stood silently by the window, leaning against the frame, looking out on the whirl of sleet that dashed against the glass. Now and then she moved slightly, but made no sound.

The nurse arrived, and Basil dashed out, got a cab, and drove off in pursuit of the doctor; ran him down, and haled him post-haste to the flat; where he pronounced that he would not be needed for many hours to come, and to Basil's dismay went off again. Two figures flickered before Basil's eyes: the nurse, calm and smiling, in her white uniform, moving swiftly about in Teresa's room; and Teresa, in her trailing black dress, walking slowly up and down the drawing-room, and perfectly silent. She did not reply to Basil's anxious questions, and hardly looked at him. He wandered about in a lost way. Dinner stood untasted in the dining-room. He looked into Teresa's room. It was flooded with electric light. All the orange shades, and his wife's other little vanities, had been taken away.

The bed stood out bleak and chill, with tightly-drawn white sheets. The air smelt of drugs. This was no more the chamber of love, but a torture-chamber. Basil forgot what he had meant to ask the nurse, and went away with tears in his eyes.

It was a long night. No one thought of sleep. Toward morning the doctor came to stay. Teresa, exhausted, dozed for moments at a time, sitting on the couch in the drawing-room, holding Basil's hand; but after a few instants of semi-consciousness her eyes would start open, her pale face flush red, and Basil lifted her up, while she leaned her weight upon him and gasped, her lips tight closed. This went on for hours. . . . Seeing her exhaustion, Basil once poured out a glass of champagne and begged her to drink it. But Teresa, as the agony seized her again, blazed up for a moment, snatched the glass and flung the champagne in Basil's face and the goblet across the room, where it shivered to pieces.

"Dearest!" he murmured humbly.

Teresa looked at him murderously, then suddenly caught hold of him, and sobbed under her breath. . . .

The livid dawn brought in a grey morning of storm. They took Teresa away, into the room. Basil was sent out two or three times on hasty errands. He swallowed a cup of coffee, stand-

ing in the dining-room. Mary the cook sat there with her apron to her eyes, mumbling a prayer. He looked at her with terrified eyes.

"You don't think she's going to die, do you?" he said angrily.

"Oh, no, Heaven forbid, but it do be so long," gasped the girl.

He went back and waited outside the door. He heard the doctor's voice, now quick and brusque, as he gave an order; now curiously gentle, as though he spoke to a child. . . .

All night she had not made a sound of pain. And, now, when the chloroform had put her will to sleep, and the voice began, Basil thought at first it was some animal crying in the street. It was with a horrible leap of the heart that he realised it—*that* was Teresa's voice. It sounded to him as though it came from far away—a wail from some cruel dark world of woe and anguish. And it went on and on. . . .

Then came a shrill scream that seemed to tear the heart out of his breast—another—and another. Then silence. . . . He leaned against the door, faint with terror.

The nurse came out to him after a time and said smiling, "You have a fine boy." He seized both her hands and began to weep hysterically. . . . Later, they let him in to see Teresa. She lay with her eyes closed. His tears fell on her hands. She murmured:

"The jaws of death—the jaws of death—I'm all ground and chewed to atoms, Basil. I feel as if I had died——"

He could say nothing. The baby, about which he had not thought at all, began to cry. The nurse was bathing it, and she held it out for Basil to see—a red, angry creature, with bristles of black hair and pale-blue eyes. It shrieked lustily with wide-open mouth.

"Let me see him," said Teresa faintly.

The nurse brought the baby; and after one curious look of inspection, the young mother remarked:

"How very hideous he is. Take him away."

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A week later Teresa confided to Basil, tearfully, that she did not like the baby, and that she was sure he was going to be a frightful nuisance and spoil their life together. She complained viciously, too, of her continued physical sufferings and weakness, and her disturbed nights. She had braced herself with all her strength for the great ordeal of giving birth; and the minor discomforts and annoyances which followed she resented as something not taken into the bargain.

Basil groaned, and buried his face in the pillow beside her. He had caught a fearful cold on the night of the baby's birth, and he had had no rest or peace since. His household was dis-

organised, he was nervously anxious about the baby, which encountered the usual difficulties in adapting itself to a new environment, and signalised its displeasure by fairly continuous screaming; and Teresa's rebellion was the final straw.

"You see I was right," Teresa said weakly, "and you were wrong. You're always so cocksure with your theories! You were sure I should love the baby, and I don't believe you even like it yourself."

"I wish you'd keep quiet," growled Basil. "I think you're very silly. Why don't you make the best of things?"

"I won't. I never will make the best of things. It's a horrid confession of weakness. I insist on seeing them as they are. You're afraid to. You know we were perfectly happy before——"

She stopped, and two tears grew in her eyes and wandered down her cheeks. In spite of her physical uneasiness, she had the strange new beauty that women buy with the birth-pangs. Her white skin glowed with freshness, her lips were fuller and redder, and the two thick dark braids of hair lying across her shoulders framed an oval of cheeks and chin, exquisitely youthful and tender.

The baby, which was being carried about in the next room, a pathetic bundle of flannel over

the nurse's brawny arm, now lifted up its voice again, and Teresa cried:

"For heaven's sake, Basil, shut the doors! If that creature cries any more, I shall go mad!"

But it was time for the baby to be fed, and the nurse remorselessly brought it in. Teresa sulkily turned on her side and stretched out her arm to receive it. But when the baby, with whimpering eagerness and frantic clutches of its fingers, had settled to the breast, she looked down on it and smiled half unwillingly.

"How cuddly it is! So soft and warm! If only it wouldn't howl so—I wouldn't mind so much if it were always like this."

At the change in her voice Basil raised his head.

"Poor little thing, it's because it's hungry, or has the colic—I should think you'd be sorry for it," he said reproachfully.

Teresa lifted the baby's wrinkled red hands and listened to the small sound of sensuous content which it made in feeding.

"He sings just like a kettle—or an asthmatic kitten," she said, looking amused.

Basil's tired face, showing deep lines of nervous and physical strain, changed, too, as he looked at the picture of Teresa and the baby—her profile, with the long braid across the cheek, her ivory-white gleaming shoulders and breast, her dark lashes drooping as she gazed at the

child with a quizzical smile in which emotion stirred—physical pleasure and perhaps a spiritual tenderness.

"You don't know how beautiful you are," said Basil, in a low, rapt tone.

She looked up at him softly, put up her free arm and drew his head down on her full breast.

"If I'm more beautiful for you, I don't mind it all," she said. "All the babies in the world aren't worth *you.*"

III

TERESA, however, took the baby seriously, and by dint of this conscientious care began to be fond of him. She resigned herself to the task of nursing him, supervised minutely the details of his daily life, and carried out Basil's theory that the baby must be saved all nervous excitement. He was named Ronald Grange, after her father. In the course of a few weeks he lost his black bristles and began to acquire a fuzz of soft brown hair; his eyes, after wavering in colour, decided to be brown, like Basil's; his complexion from brick-red became first a curious yellow, and then approached fairness. Teresa began to feel that he might ultimately be presentable. He was a strong child with a determined will to live. Major Ransome pronounced him a beauty, and in his grandfatherly delight called on the baby three of four times a week. Grandparents, however, were peculiarly obnoxious to Basil's theory; the poor Major was not allowed to hold Ronald Grange, or to prod any portion of his anatomy with a doting finger, or to chirrup to him. Basil considered that even looking at the baby as he lay in his crib was self-indulgence on the part of

the elders which might involve some nervous strain for Ronald Grange. Basil was about the house pretty constantly for some time after the baby's birth, imforming Teresa that he couldn't yet settle down to work. He kept a sharp eye on the nurse, and if Teresa fed the baby too early or too late he knew it. He kept many visitors away from Ronald Grange, and Teresa's Aunt Sophy went away in a passion because, after three visits, she had not yet succeeded in seeing the baby. Teresa, however, took advantage of Basil's occasional absences. She herself was not allowed to hold the baby any longer than was strictly necessary. But several times when Basil was well away she actually played with Ronald Grange, tickled the soles of his feet, kissed the back of his neck, and once, the Major arriving in the midst of such an orgy, she took pity on the poor old man and let him have his share. That day Ronald Grange was trotted on the Major's knee, chucked under the chin, poked in the ribs, and whistled to. Teresa felt guilty, and watched Ronald for some days for signs of nervous prostration. But there was now a bond of crime between her and the Major, and they continued at intervals to furnish the baby with contraband amusement.

Mrs. Perry had been in Florida for February and March. When she returned to town she came at once to see Teresa. Basil was not at

home, and Teresa allowed the baby to be brought in, at Mrs. Perry's demand.

"I've brought some things for him," said the lady. "Oh, what a darling!"

Teresa looked sceptically at the baby's mottled face, and at her visitor; but Mrs. Perry's expression, as she took the baby and tucked it up against her shoulder, and touched its fuzzy head with her cheek, silenced the sceptic. Teresa watched curiously. Mrs. Perry walked up and down the room with the baby, and then sat down, holding him as though he were made of delicate crystal.

"How warm and soft they are!" she breathed, her full-lidded dark eyes closing slowly. "I like that smell of warm flannel. They're just like little birds, all soft down! What a darling!"

Teresa said nothing. She was thoroughly surprised. When the nurse came to take the baby, Mrs. Perry produced her gift—two little dresses beautifully sewed by hand. "I made them every stitch myself for him," she said. Teresa was oddly touched by this. Alice had sent the baby an ivory with gold bells. Many other gifts had been sent to him, but no one else she knew had actually made anything for him. Mrs. Perry asked to see his bed and his wardrobe, and she turned over his tiny garments with caressing fingers. When she went away Teresa thought Mrs. Perry was going to offer to kiss her, but to

her relief it did not happen. She would not have liked to kiss Mrs. Perry, though she liked her.

She liked her with the calm and civilised part of her intelligence, and at the same time obscurely hated her. She appreciated Mrs. Perry's good qualities, liked the way she treated herself, but would not have been sorry to hear that some calamity had befallen that lady, for example, the loss of her good looks. Teresa knew that an intimacy existed between Mrs. Perry and Basil, and she did not know the extent of it. Basil had assured her that it was not an emotional relation, except in so far as Mrs. Perry had an emotional need for a friend to whom she could talk freely and profoundly, and look for sympathy. But Teresa believed that Basil would lie in such a case, though probably in no other. With her he had proceeded on a general plan of extreme frankness. Recognising the impersonal and almost masculine element in her intelligence, and allowing it, perhaps, more weight than it really possessed in her total make-up, Basil had laid bare to her all his ideas and feelings, and most of his doings. For the first year of their marriage he had had nothing to conceal, and his natural disposition to frankness, rather brutal sometimes and partaking a little of the crystalline hardness of his nature, had had full sway.

A cardinal point of his doctrine was that only emotional infidelity counted, and he passionately assured Teresa that this was quite out of the range of possibility for him. She tried to believe him.

But there were so many other things besides love, in this essential sense! And Basil's interest in the sex was as wide as the world. He had an inexhaustible curiosity, which he called psychological, and which Teresa called puerile; a keen, almost romantic, sense of the drama of life; a need of all sorts of free and indefinite human relations. His theories were in favour of absolute freedom among civilised beings in a generation which was profoundly anarchic. Teresa distrusted all theories. At the same time, intellectually, she approved of Basil; but this fact, as she pointed out to him, might not prevent her from hating him, and some time doing him an injury.

"I cannot get rid of the sense of possession," she said. "I regard you as my property, and your interest in other women as stolen from me. I know it's absurd, but you can't account for feelings, or get rid of them, either."

"So I am your property," said Basil. "But you don't want to lock me up, do you? You wouldn't care a snap for me if I was interested in nothing but you. It's because I know a lot of others that I know how much nicer you are."

"That's all very well, but I wish I didn't *care*. Sometimes I wish you hadn't told me things. Scenes come up to me—pictures—all sorts of things. Then I hate you."

"Oh, I forget sometimes that you're a woman," said Basil, with a humorous sigh. "I talk to you as I would to a man. And you like it."

"Oh, I like it well enough. But—perhaps it isn't so awfully clever of you."

"Why not? Why? What do you mean?"

She smiled and wouldn't answer. When he pressed her to speak, she shook her head enigmatically. Basil took her by the throat and threatened to choke her if she didn't explain; whereat she laughed, and said gaily:

"Never mind. We're good friends, anyway. I think we always shall be, and like each other best of all. It doesn't matter if we amuse ourselves a little by the way. There—that's the point of view I'm striving to reach."

"You are? Well, I thought you'd always had that point of view."

"In a purely abstract way, but I want to *feel* it—I want to put it into practice. I hate mere theories."

"That's all right—but a good many theories ain't practicable," said Basil, after a pause. "There's a difference, you know."

"A difference where?"

"Between you and me, for example."

"Oh, I'm sure of it. Many of your amusements wouldn't appeal to me at all. But I understand all you say about the claims of the temperament, and, do you know, I believe I have got a temperament, too! I'm certain I'm dying to be amused. And, then, if I am amused, I shan't mind if you are. You may investigate life as much as you choose, and make all the psychological experiments you please. And I won't be a bit jealous. I've made up my mind to get rid of that mean, sneaking feeling, and I *will*. And this is the way to do it."

"What is? You've always had your friends, if that's all. There's Page, and Alvord—and Dallas spends hours alone with you every week."

"Gerald! Dear old Gerald! . . . No, I'm not talking about him!"

"Well, who then, you little wretch?"

Basil laughed heartily and contemplated his wife with easy admiration. But she cast a glance at him from under her lashes, smiled slightly, and began to talk about something else.

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She spent the summer with the baby at a dull resort on the Maine coast; and this rounded out an entire year devoted to Ronald Grange. Ronald was weaned, and throve, and began certainly to pay for himself. He was a vigorous and beautiful little creature; and Teresa, who bathed him herself and mixed his food and

watched his sleep on the sands, now learned the intimate sweetness of his small, definite personality, felt the soft charm of his unfolding intelligence and expressiveness, was infinitely touched by his dependence on her, and his consciousness of it. She came to love him with part of the emotion that hitherto had been given only to Basil.

Except for the baby, Teresa was bored; she lived a perfectly hygienic life, and saw that she grew more beautiful. Basil's warm recognition of this fact, during the month that he spent with her, lent a new interest to life. Their separation, the first since their marriage, was due to money necessities. Basil had found that an income which sufficed for two self-indulgent people was not enough for two and a baby; and he had been painting pot-boilers for Mrs. Perry, who had a scheme for decorating her library with views of the natural beauties of America. He had been bored, too, as his daily letters showed Teresa; he had longed for her, restless in the loss of their companionship and the domestic atmosphere which satisfied some deep need of his nature; and when he finally came it was like an ardent burst of the south wind—a storm of happiness. He wanted to spend his whole day beside Teresa, to talk to her half the night; he was even jealous of the baby. It was a new honeymoon, more passionate than the

first, and Teresa now first began to feel the full power of her beauty. Basil's æsthetic appreciation of her had grown steadily; she pleased him now more deeply than ever; and she rejoiced, for some instinct told her that, holding Basil by this feeling and by his domestic side, she held the real man.

IV

HE was a man rather difficult to tie; and he had just escaped from a determined effort to entangle him, on the part of Isabel Perry. Isabel's choice seemed to lie between him and a convent. For some time past she had been studying the Catholic doctrine. A strong impulse of her passionate nature forced her toward that faith; but as yet she had only a desire to be convinced, not a conviction. In his last interview with her, at her country-house, Basil had found her much moved by a long visit that morning from a Catholic priest, in whom she thought she had found a sort of Pascal. The master of the house was away, for Isabel's advances to the faith were much more surreptitious than her love affairs. Basil was to lunch with her. He found her in tears, torn between the effect of the priest's talk and a violent revulsion.

"Let us go out," she had said at once on seeing him, and she had led the way out of the library that opened on a broad stretch of turf, into the wood. Walking there, she told him, in a depressed, nervous tone, of her difficulties.

"If I could only be *sure*," she said, clasping

her hands over the breast of her white dress. "It seems to me that my religious feelings are only a result of my disappointment with life. I want to leave the world, not because I believe, *really* believe, that the religious life is the right one, but because I can't bear the life I lead. I would rather have absolute negation than the desire for something that doesn't exist. It's the *life* that attracts me. I couldn't become a Catholic and stay in the world. I wish to be shut out from it, to live in some narrow place, in a strict rule, to feel as mortal sin what I now want without really believing in it—and, *then,* I believe, I really *should* believe—I should see good and evil where now I see neither. I should feel that I have sinned, as I did when I talked to Father Damon just now—but now I don't feel it——"

She turned suddenly and took Basil's arm. "With *you,*" she said, "I always feel the other thing, the other appeal. Just the thought that I was to see you to-day—and it kept coming up all the time Father Damon was talking —made me feel my inability to accept what he represents. To me just now, Basil, *you* are the world—not the world I want to get away from, my world—but the other, that I want without believing in it. I mean your point of view, your acceptance of life, the ease with which you take it—it seems to jar nothing in you, to leave noth-

ing unsatisfied—you seem to me, in short, so happy——"

She stopped in her rapid talk, her rapid pace along the grassy walk under the trees, and looked up at him, pale and agitated. "You don't understand my unhappiness, do you? You can't help me?" she asked.

Her hand, clinging to his arm, her whole attitude of appeal, moved Basil, but he felt, more than emotion, a sense of constraint. Her eyes were appealing, but her mouth was imperious, eager.

"No one can help you," he said slowly. "We can't help one another—except by giving enjoyment now and then—that's my creed. I can't give you my enjoyment of life. I enjoy it because I am made to enjoy it. It floats me. It depresses you. You ask of life more than it can give. Perhaps that's the nobler attitude—I don't know. I'm sure it's the more romantic one. I'm not romantic, Isabel. Your alternatives of ecstatic happiness or the cloister both seem to me impossible. I can't understand wanting to be ecstatic, in or out of religion—but I see that you do want to be."

"But, surely, you believe, at least in moments of happiness, in a feeling of joy that might lift one out of the maddening groove of life—you believe in love, Basil?"

"Not as you do, Isabel," he said gravely. "Not

as anything supernatural, mystic. I believe in it as a sweet, every-day food of life—good and wholesome and necessary, like bread and butter. But you think it must be nectar and ambrosia, sent down expressly from heaven . . . !"

He smiled at her—their eyes were on a level.

"Ah, you see, I've never had it," she sighed.

She looked away, down a bright vista of sunny grass crossed by tree-shadows.

"You mention bread and butter, and lunch must be ready," she said. "Forgive me for boring you with my stupid troubles. I wish I could be happy in a commonplace way, like you."

Basil laughed gaily.

"I wish you could! Commonplace isn't half so bad as you think," he said. "Do resign yourself to it, Isabel, and don't talk any more to Father Damon! Fancy you in a nun's dress—your beautiful hair cut short—no, you mustn't do it!"

"How frivolous you are," she murmured, but she smiled and blushed suddenly. She was leaning against a great oak-trunk, and she looked up at him. . . . Basil did not kiss her. He was conscious that it was expected, and in his mind there was a clear perception: It would be fatal. Isabel's emotional demand frightened him. This situation between them had been growing more and more definite and difficult. It was with a marked feeling of relief that

Basil, after lunch, said good-bye to her for a month.

.

That month Teresa finished modelling Basil's bust. It was the first ambitious thing she had done since her marriage. She was in love with his beauty as she did it—the clear essentially sculptural character of his finely-modelled head, the free, dominant poise of it.

"That's you, Basil—*all* of you," she said, the day it was finished, after gazing long at it.

"It's a good-looking piece of work," Basil admitted.

And Erhart, who came up for a week to give his opinion on it, pronounced that it had bone.

"Of course one sees that it's a woman's work," he added patronisingly.

"Of course," said Teresa mockingly, "but one is astonished that the dog should dance so well, considering that it was meant to go on all-fours —isn't that it?"

"Something of that sort. Do I hear your Aunt Sophy talking?"

"You will, sooner or later. I am coming round to her point of view."

"You a *feministe!* There are no young and pretty ones, remember that. Wait till you're thirty, at least."

"Oh, two years of being married to Basil are

a liberal education in feminism. I'm at least forty in experience."

"Oh, nonsense. You adore Basil."

"Of course I adore him. His altars smoke with sacrifice. But all the same I think I shall raise one to the Unknown God."

"On which no one will be allowed to sacrifice but yourself, eh?" said Erhart. "You want a monopoly."

"Oh, there's no god sufficiently unknown for that!" Teresa laughed. "There's such a superfluity of adoration in this world. No wonder our deities are overfed. I think I shall put Basil on a meagre diet."

"Don't do anything to Basil, he's good enough. He's the most married man I know."

"He? He's the aboriginal wild man, roaming the happy hunting-grounds—in Mrs. Perry's automobile. And I keep the wigwam neat and clean, and look after the papoose."

"You couldn't do a better job," said Erhart aggressively.

Erhart came up to stay a week, but he stayed a month, in fact till the Ransomes returned to town, and occupied himself in making a bas-relief of Teresa's head. At first his attitude toward them both was what it had always been —friendly and frank. But soon he began to show some irritation against Basil. He devoted himself obviously to Teresa, tried to get her off

on long walks alone, and was moody and bored when Basil was of the party. When he was alone with Teresa, he spent most of his time in criticising Basil. He declared that Basil was volatile, lazy; that he only amused himself with work and life; that he did not take even his wife seriously enough.

"He suits me," Teresa said calmly, a good deal amused. "He's a charming companion, and always interesting. And I can assure you that he takes me and the baby with the utmost seriousness."

"But he leaves you alone here all summer."

"He had to make some money, poor dear. You've no idea how expensive Ronald is. If you think he wasn't glad to get here——!"

"Oh, I suppose he was. He's fond of you, I think, in his way."

Teresa smiled.

"He's an awfully good fellow," Erhart proceeded. "It's too bad his habits are so irregular—bad for his work and everything, I should think. He's got some talent, and if he'd only pitch in and *work*——"

"Once for all, Basil isn't a grub. He knows he'll never be a great painter, and he's too much humour to take himself with awful seriousness. He knows perfectly well the measure of his ability, he can do good work and he knows it, but what he cares most about is living."

"Living?" grumbled Erhart. "I really don't think Basil's way of living is admirable. I wish he didn't drink at all. It's no wonder he's nervous and irritable, and his temper bad."

"I thought you liked Basil," said Teresa demurely.

"I do like him—very much, in some ways. And that's why I hate to see him wasting himself so. It would be a lot better for you if he worked more regularly and successfully. I don't think he does as much as he might for you. You're the sort of woman that luxury suits, you need it. I should think it would be a pleasure to give it to you."

Teresa put a shade of melancholy into her far-away gaze. "My tastes are very simple," she said.

"Oh, that's because you're really very sweet and kind, and you never worry people; I've noticed that. But all beautiful women need a setting, and they all want it, too, if they haven't got it. When a man's lucky enough to be married to a woman like you, he ought to live up to it. Basil's a good fellow, an interesting fellow, but I don't think he deserves you, really."

Teresa's amusement in this conversation was so great that she repeated it word for word to Basil. Basil was not at all amused.

"I'd like to know what the devil he means by that sort of talk," he said. "I don't call it very friendly, abusing me like that to you. He's

making love to you, that's what it is. I've noticed lately that he doesn't want me around. I like his nerve!"

"Don't quarrel with him," said Teresa, laughing.

"Quarrel! Of course not. Only I must say I don't like it. It's all right for him to admire you—I like men to admire you—but I don't see why he should turn against *me*. It's confoundedly unpleasant—but I never did like the fellow much anyway."

"He isn't the most subtle or the best-mannered person I know," murmured Teresa. "But he means no harm."

"Doesn't he? He doesn't mean any good, either, so far as I can see."

"Oh, yes—he wants to reform your habits, and make you ambitious, and me rich."

"The devil he does. He wants to make you discontented with me."

"Well, he can't. So you needn't worry. Don't take him seriously, or I'll never tell you another thing."

"Yes, you will! You'll tell me everything, or I'll choke the life out of you!" And Basil playfully clasped his hands about her throat.

Teresa laughed.

"It's pure self-indulgence for me to tell you everything, though at times I think it's unwise. In this case, for instance. You don't like Erhart

as much as you did before. I've done a wrong to him in telling you. But I like so much to feel that you know everything, and that everything is clear between us, at least on my side, that I don't care. I am immoral in my honesty. Only you mustn't show that I've told you, you know. That would be immoral of *you.*"

"Oh, I won't, of course. Only don't let Erhart make love to you."

"*Erhart!* I should say not. You're—unpleasant, Basil."

"No, I'm not jealous," he said, laughing. "Only, if any man makes love to you, I'd like it to be some fellow I like, you know—some really good man. And that doesn't mean you're to encourage him—at least not much. Otherwise I don't mind at all."

"How generous of you!" said Teresa, with sarcasm.

There was now often a tinge of sharpness in her tone toward Basil. She knew that he had his reserves. He had been as diplomatic as possible on the subject of Mrs. Perry; but his practical wisdom had not quite deceived Teresa's instinct. She knew there was something he had not told her—but she felt also that, whatever it might be, it was not very important. She could not be deceived in Basil's feeling for herself; and she was learning to fight against her disposition to take seriously everything relat-

ing to him. In spite of his essential simplicity, in spite of his love for her, there was, she felt dimly, too much in him, in life with him, that might give her pain. She tried, therefore, to attain something of his own ease, of that quality which would have been lightness if his essential force, his reality, his will, had been less; but which now seemed to her more an enviable buoyancy and power of resistance to the ills of life.

V

ONE night in the early winter a party of people started out, after dining at the Ransome's flat, on a slumming expedition. The affair had been arranged for Alice Blackley's benefit; Alice was more eager than ever to see life, and she thought she would like to see it in undress. She had confided to Teresa lately that she was tired of artists (except Basil, of course), and that she did not believe they were any more interesting, when you knew them, than other people. However, Erhart was of the present party, which contained besides only Basil and Teresa, for Erhart was anxious to please Mrs. Blackley, having an eye always to the commercial side of his profession; and Basil had amiably brought the two together.

It was late when they started, the two women in quiet, dark dresses, appropriate for a pure tour of inspection. They went first into the Tenderloin, to two or three music-halls, and a place where coffee and cigarettes and Turkish furnishings competed with the inevitable whisky.

The music-halls were noisy, glaring with electric light, and filled with a crowd of men and girls, sitting or moving about the little tables,

whose gaiety seemed as hard and thin as the light's blue flare. The tough faces of the waiters, the careless or determined cheerfulness of the women, the bored or excited look of the men of widely varying types, the perpetual drinking, all mixed together in a mirage of which pleasure was the least discoverable element. Some of the girls were very pretty, many of them were young, most of them well-dressed; and all tried to diffuse about themselves an atmosphere of reckless life, zest, enjoyment. But seen in the mass, all these various attempts resulted in one great effect of sham.

Alice's large eyes studied the scene intently. She was so much interested that it was difficult to get her away; yet she had a blank look, too.

"I thought it would have been more exciting," she said. "Don't they dance, or anything?"

The Turkish coffee place, with its dimmer lights and languid couples, she thought more interesting; but still her deer-like eyes looked vainly about for something she did not see; still she seemed perplexed. "Is this really life?" she seemed to ask. "*Are* these the haunts of vice? Are these people really the horrid people we've come out to see? And if so, why are they not more spectacular?"

From the Tenderloin they crossed to the Bowery, and walked slowly down the broad street, howling with the noise of the cars, bright with

electricity, crowded with undistinguished people. From innumerable saloons and ten-cent shows came the tinkling strains of mechanical music. All the small shops which catered to the needs of the undistinguished were open, to meet their customers' leisure hours, and so the broad, dirty sidewalk lay in one continuous glare of light.

They went into one music-hall—a bare, untidy room, with a few men sitting over their beer, and on the platform a stout, middle-aged woman, in short skirts, rouge, and a picture hat, singing a sentimental song to the accompaniment of a cracked piano. Several girls walked about, talking to the sallow, stolid men. One stood alone near the piano. She was conspicuous in her solitude, and also because, for all the loose coat that hid her figure, it could be seen that she was about to bear a child. One of the men pointed a thumb at her over his shoulder, and said something to his companion; they both laughed. The girl smiled, with a piteous attempt at bravado.

Teresa hurried her party out of the place. Basil took them next to a saloon where he expected to find an acquaintance of his, an ex-prize-fighter, whose reputation for wit extended up and down and even beyond the Bowery. The saloon was crowded and noisy, and a blast of foul language met them as they entered. Basil

hastily extracted his man, who saluted him with a "Hello, bloke!" Then the five went to have "chop suey" at a Chinese restaurant to which the ex-prize-fighter led them with the air of a man who knew his world, and was quite indifferent to any other.

He was a small, wiry man, collarless, rather drunk, with a sallow face, hard as steel, in which smouldered two half-extinct black eyes. Scarcely a muscle of his face moved when he spoke. He slid his words out of the corner of his thin immobile lips, and they rapped with an emphasis like that of metal on metal. His eyes were perfectly expressionless as he observed the various members of the party. He had seen innumerable slumming parties, and while he was quite willing to talk to any of them for the sake of a supper, drink, and a few dollars at the end of the evening, their world did not interest him. He patronised them as easily as he did the Chinese waiters in the small room up a dirty flight of stairs, where he selected the best table, and issued his curt orders. The two Chinese, in loose linen coats and flapping slippers, brought rice, tea, and the curious mixture of veal, bamboo-shoots, and unknown condiments which figured on the sign outside. The prize-fighter addressed to them a few words in their own tongue, and a shade which might have been a smile passed over their faces, immovable as his own.

Then he took the big bowl of rice and a pair of chop-sticks, put the chop-sticks first into his mouth, then into the rice, and passed the bowl round the table. Rice was generally declined, but the party tried eating the chop suey with their bamboo sticks. The prize-fighter managed his deftly, and endeavoured to instruct the others.

"You've got 'em by the wrong end, see? Hold 'em so," he said to Alice.

She persisted in her own way, however, and he said with indifference:

"All right, Sis, what you don't know won't hurt you."

Then, on Erhart's lead, he began to talk about a recent prize-fight. Erhart described to the rest of them, with æsthetic enthusiasm, the marvellous effect of the pink bodies of the men, seen through a cloud of dust; and the ex-professional listened cynically.

"I'm going to model Young, the light-weight," exclaimed Erhart. "I got him to promise to pose for me. I can do a bully thing of the fighter!"

"What's the good of that?" demanded the other. "If you want to make a statoo, you'd ought to take the champion. You make a good likeness of *him,* and I tell you, young feller, every saloon in the country'd take a copy. You don't know your own business."

Basil changed the topic and asked after the prize-fighter's wife.

"About the same," he answered. "A doc told her she had consumption, and she'd ought to go to the country. But she won't go and leave me for fear I'd get drunk too much."

"Why don't you go with her, then?" enquired Alice.

"Me in the country? What in hell would I do in the country?" he replied contemptuously. "There ain't no better air than there is right here on the Bowery—it's as good as Fifth Av-noo air any day, mind that, Sis."

Alice looked at Basil and giggled. Basil smiled wearily. He had been very silent all the evening, and when he was not talking his face looked gloomy. Teresa, too, seemed oppressed. She felt as though she were at the bottom of some vast slough, where unpleasant creatures of all sorts swarmed, living their pathetic lives. The perfect content of the prize-fighter with his particular spot in the slough was illuminating, yet it did not lighten the impression of the whole. The man interested her. She studied his face, but did not try to talk to him. The gulf between their worlds was too wide, and she knew that she was as intolerant of his as he of hers.

He began presently to talk about politics to the two men, and gave a racy outline of the Bow-

ery's sentiments concerning a recent municipal election. In the midst of this, on a hint from Basil, the party moved on, the prize-fighter leading the way. They walked through Chinatown—quaint, dingy, mysterious shadow of the East thrown athwart the old houses of the Knickerbockers—and then they came out on the Bowery again, and went into another drinking-place. This was full of sailors, half or quite drunk. There were a number of young girls, shabbily dressed; and among them were two slight, pretty creatures, who looked not older than sixteen. As soon as they had taken a table, and, as a matter of form, ordered beer, a drunken sailor came up to their party, and leaning over the table and fixing a pair of child-like, sad eyes on Teresa, began a long story of his sufferings and wrongs on board his ship. His voice was so pathetic, his incoherent unhappiness so convincing, that the two women listened, quite fascinated; but he repeated himself, and finally lost himself in a maze of words, lurching heavily to this side and that; when Basil rose, took him by the arm, and led him away to another table, gave him a drink, and left him murmuring to himself.

Teresa looked about the room as though in a dream. The close air, the smell of beer, the throng of brutal faces, the drunken, lascivious eyes, the rough words caught here and there, made up an impression of naked sordidness so complete as to

pass reality. The movements of the one waiter fascinated her. He was a young man, slim and powerfully built, with a face almost handsome, which had the same absolute hardness and immobility that marked the prize-fighter's. He moved quickly amongst the crowd, with a business-like, lordly air, his eyes everywhere at once. He swept off half-filled beer-glasses, and brought full ones without being asked, balancing a tray in each hand. And twice in fifteen minutes he put down his trays, took an obstreperous sailor by the collar and jerked him through the door of the place into the street without moving a muscle of his face, or losing for an instant his business-like calm.

"That's the bouncer," explained Erhart to Alice. She wanted to know all about the bouncer, whom Basil was sketching on the back of a letter; but she was even more interested in the two young girls, and at her request Erhart asked them to come up to the table, and gave them some beer. They were not at all shy. The prettiest at once began to talk to Teresa with easy frankness; told her that she and her friend lived in a room together, and had done so for two years; that she was a morphine-fiend; and she showed, with a certain pride, her arm, covered with punctures. Her face was round and delicately coloured, without a touch of powder or paint. She had large, blue eyes, and curl-

ing, brown hair. The other girl was paler, more nervous, but almost as pretty. Neither was over seventeen. The nervous girl slipped away in a few moments, and sat down at a table with a sailor. Teresa was still talking with the other, when at the far end of the room a disturbance began. The bouncer leaped to the fray, and ejected two individuals; but in a moment the room was in an uproar. The crowd surged down toward the door, overturning tables and chairs; every second man drew a knife or pistol. Basil, Erhart, and the prize-fighter pushed the three women toward the wall, and made a buffer between them and the crowd; but in spite of their efforts they were caught in the jam and forced under a hail of broken glass, toward the one narrow entrance. Basil stretched out his arms on either side of Teresa, and with vicious digs of his elbows and fists, tried to protect her. Gleaming eyes turned toward him, and one man lifted a knife. They were crushed in the shouting, heaving mass. Teresa, half-suffocated, almost lost consciousness, but fear for Basil sustained her. In a final, fierce stampede they were pushed through the door.

When they found themselves in the street, and succeeded in reaching the other three, it was discovered that Erhart had a deep knife-cut in the arm, and by common consent the expedition broke up. The Ransomes took Alice home. She

was pleased by the evening; talked a good deal about the two young girls, and the possibility of reforming them, or at least of giving them some good clothes, so that they would have a better chance.

Teresa could not get to sleep that night. When she closed her eyes the room was peopled by the dreadful faces she had seen. The drunken sailor, the "bouncer," the girl at whom those men had laughed, the pretty young girl with the spotted arm, stood out on a background of sodden, diseased, malevolent human wrecks. This was worse than the sham mirth of the Tenderloin; perhaps it was the reality behind the sham. The figures all whirled round as though in a drunken dance, and behind them she seemed to see uncounted myriads of other figures, all driven on blindly, all mad, broken, blighted.

Basil had given her his sketch of the "bouncer" as they came home. She had seen in his eyes that night not only gloom and weariness, but also the impersonal interest in the scene before him that meant a stirring of his impulse to expression. He would put them all down on paper—those pathetic girls, those brutal or stupid men—all that complex of misery, all that waste of life. And it would mean to him just fact—just what *is*, what must be.

In her present mood she revolted, as she often did, against his acceptation of the world, invol-

ving even, it seemed to her, a certain pleasure in its hardness, its inequalities. Perhaps this was the artistic interest, the dramatic interest; but to Teresa now it seemed cruel to enjoy the sight of such a world, to use it as material for art. The impersonal side of Basil presented itself to her as a cool, observing eye, a firm noting hand; apart from his own human interests, he was not moved—the mass of misery did not move him. He dissociated himself from it completely. His attitude was: "I did not make this world—I'm not responsible for it—I can't help it. I can only observe it, recognise it for what it is—and make my own particular life out of it, a satisfaction to myself." Basil was selfish, egotistic, hard—but he loved her, and she loved him. A sudden need to be near him came upon her. She got up and went into his room.

The winter dawn was faintly beginning. He was asleep. His relaxed face looked sad, but sleep gave it also a curiously young expression, a strange beauty. She crept into the bed beside him; half waking, he put his arm about her, and murmured something softly. They had quarrelled bitterly the day before. But now, comforted to the soul by his nearness, and the word of endearment that had come unconsciously from the deep feeling that united them, from the depths below all surface storms, Teresa, too, could sleep.

VI

DIFFICULTIES had thickened upon them this winter. They had a larger flat, in a more salubrious (and expensive) neighbourhood, and three servants. The baby had made this difference, with the result that they felt poor. Teresa, with a pang, had given up her bachelor rooms, for the work she was now able to do did not justify her in keeping them. But the rent of Basil's studio was high, and he had not sold anything lately, except the work he had done for Mrs. Perry. His book of drawings had been published, with a definite, but not a money success. The publishers had wanted to call it "The City Toilers," and by including mainly types of honest misery, to give it a sentimental air of pity. But Basil called it "City Types," and put into it what he considered his best work, irrespective of subject. The result could not please the sentimental public, but it pleased Basil, and also Teresa, who desired that his artistic ability should be recognised. But it did not bring in much money. For the first time in his life Basil felt the pressure of money needs. The demands of his household seemed to grow steadily, and his income was comparatively a fixed quantity.

He had never counted on making money, but now he was obliged to speculate on his work, and this brought him face to face with his own practical limitations. It was a standing grievance that Teresa was not economical. But Teresa, though she honestly tried, could not be—at least not more than a few days at a time. Then she forgot about it. She was not extravagant, but the daily worry of overseeing cheating tradesmen and servants, as well as watching the baby and the nurse, and seeing that Basil's clothes were in repair, and his meals on time, was sure to overpass at some point the limits of her domestic capacity.

They were gayer, too, this winter than ever. Teresa, after her year of the baby, had a craving for people, a quite new delight in going out, the more so since she was more beautiful and more admired. And gaiety meant expense—clothes, dinners, cabs—and less work. It meant, also, more or less emotional disturbance. Basil's theory that he was not of a jealous temperament had had a good test, and had been found not to hold water.

Among the people that they saw most of, domestic happiness was regarded as an amusing or pathetic myth, as you happened to take it. It was a mirage, and the traveller in the desert, if he could not help pursuing it, always recognised his mistake. He did not reach the mirage; but he

might find a pleasant oasis or two by the way. An apparently complete frankness about their domestic relations was also the rule in this society. People talked about their wives or husbands as amusingly as they could, and quite without sentiment. The pose of the successful ones was that they were simple good friends, and didn't interfere with one another. Behind this mask, which Basil and Teresa assumed also, went on, no doubt, many a drama like their own; and many a secret believer in the myth struggled and strove to reach what he considered to be real waters, spreading cool and peaceful, and real protection from the glaring, grinding world. Peace was, perhaps, not to be hoped for in the relation of two civilised and youthful people who had the ideal of freedom and enjoyment. The world was too much with them for any real seclusion of spirit to be possible. But they had the ever-present sense of life, an unfailing interest in one another. They might quarrel, but they were never dull, and neither had as yet a need for any other one person. They had days of perfect, simple happiness, when material difficulties were ignored, and their real relation seemed the only thing that mattered; days of frank, wordly companionship, when they talked frivolously of serious things, and a light way of taking the world made it all gay and amusing. And they had their black days, when all went wrong, when

they barely spoke to one another or communicated by means of notes; when they accused one another of self-indulgence, selfishness, egotism; when Teresa bitingly recalled Basil's sensual weaknesses, and Basil openly regretted his bachelor freedom, and assured Teresa that she was never meant for a wife. These discords were frequent, but they never lasted long; neither could stand the strain. Basil could not work under it, and it blackened the entire firmament for Teresa. It ended usually in a passionate reconciliation, wherein Basil ardently told Teresa that he could not live without her, nor with any other woman; and she promised to be domestic; and then the sky was blue, and the sunlight golden, and a heavenly breath descended upon them, and life, youth, and love seemed divine.

Their latest quarrel had been ostensibly about household affairs. The monthly bills had come in, and seemed to Basil enormous. And the nurse had been discovered feeding Ronald Grange at an undue hour. All Teresa's faults as a housewife were once more gone over, and Basil, with his usual vigour, had asserted that she cared nothing for the household, for the baby, or for him, but only for her own amusement. The real reason for the explosion was that Teresa, on the previous day, had gone out with her most devoted admirer in his automobile, and lunched with him in the country. He was a

Southerner named Fairfax; he had made a fortune in lumber; he was good-looking and had the caressing manner of his kind toward women; and for several months now he had been coming constantly to see Teresa. His time was about equally divided between the South and New York; and when he was away he wrote to her. She always showed the letters to Basil; they were friendly, gay, and interested. She admitted that she liked Fairfax very much; that she found him amusing and charming. Basil said that he liked her friendship with Fairfax; it was in line with all his ideas. He said once: "It's more exciting to drive a restive team than a quiet one; only you must look out they don't get away." His own interest in his wife seemed to increase. It had lost the quiet of the first year; it was more like the perpetual unrest of courtship. Her successes, her gaiety, intensified the appeal of her beauty to him. He seemed, too, to be less sure of her, and this pleased Teresa, and added to the light excitement of their life.

On the morning after their slumming expedition they took their coffee together amicably; Basil was gentle, but gloomy. Teresa questioned him keenly; he resisted; but at last his real feeling came out, and he confessed to a torturing jealousy.

"I didn't know I had it in me," he said savagely—angry, not with her, but with himself.

"And I can't stand it. It makes me feel weak—mentally and physically. It turns me sick. I think I'm wrong, but I can't help it. I believe the thing is stronger than I am. You're the only person in the world, Teresa, that can really make me suffer. And I believe you could half-kill me!"

His anger and resentment of his own irrationality touched Teresa, his emotion pleased her, but the practical consequences thereof rather vexed her.

"I've only done what you told me to do," she said plaintively. "You said you wanted me to have my friends among men, just as you have among women. I didn't make scenes for you—at least not serious ones—when you were so much with Mrs. Perry. And yet I had more reason to, for she was making love to you, and Jack doesn't make love to me—not seriously."

"Seriously! There it is, then—he does make love to you. I knew it. His whole manner to you shows it."

"Oh, he's Southern, you know, and they have that gallant way. My father had it—it's a tradition. He *does* like me, I'm sure—perhaps he's a little bit *épris*—but you always said you liked men to be fond of me, so long as——"

"Yes, but you like *him!* You wouldn't want to spend hours alone with him if you didn't."

"Of course I like him, silly old thing! He's charming."

Basil groaned. "Women have a terrific advantage to us," he said viciously. "Nothing I can do can affect you very deeply, unless I should fall in love with another woman, and I can't do that. But you could very easily nearly kill *me*."

"Then it's your own fault if we *have* that advantage," said Teresa calmly. "First, you carry on yourselves in such a fashion that, as you say, we can't take your lapses seriously. And then you put such terrific emphasis on the slightest lapse on our part. Why do you put the weapon into our hands, and then provoke us, if you don't want to get hurt?"

"Provocation, as you call it, oughtn't to count. A woman ought to be strong enough to stand for herself, for what she really deeply wants, without being influenced by another person's acts."

"Two people can't live together intimately without influencing one another, and deeply. And especially a woman, for her character isn't formed till she's married. Of course, I can see how the other person would like to feel that what he does counts for nothing, for so he gets rid of all responsibility—only it doesn't work that way."

"The Orientals manage these things better," said Basil gloomily. "A Mohammedan can take as many women into his house as he can support,

and they're all protected and cared for, and respectable. And if they're unfaithful, he can bowstring them. That's the right method. Monogamy is a foolish idea, and we waste an enormous amount of life in trying to live up to it. The Japanese are infinitely more sane than we are about the whole business. Sex ought to be divorced from emotion. They don't belong together. We've sentimentalised the thing till we don't know where we stand. It's all the fault of feminism. Women naturally sentimentalise it, and we've let them set the tone for our whole society, till we can't call our souls or bodies our own. It's weakness, and gets paid out as weakness always does. We belong to you now, you own us, and you make us feel it."

"Poor slaves!" mocked Teresa. "Why don't you rise and assert your rights? Put us back in the harem, and then go on with your great work of civilising the world in peace. I daresay we should be just as well off."

"I think you would. You can't be men, anyway, you know, and in our society you're bound to try to be, more or less. It's all wrong. The line ought to stand where it was drawn for all time, sharp and clear. Trying to rub it away is folly."

"*I* don't try to be a man," murmured Teresa. "I wouldn't be one for any amount. Poor, foolish creatures."

"Yes, you do try. You want the same freedom——"

"I thought we agreed the ideal was equal freedom."

"So it would be if women were capable of it, if they were like men, capable of dissociating ideas that don't really belong together. But they're not. They emotionalise everything."

"Even an automobile drive and a sedate luncheon? Really, you're silly, Basil."

"Perhaps I am," he admitted darkly. "But I can't help it."

"I don't think, really, that it's a tremendous compliment to me—your jealousy," said Teresa coldly.

"No, it isn't. But it isn't the other thing either. You're so much alive, Teresa! And you're beautiful, and you love admiration. And really I feel that you might sometime care too much for someone else."

"It's no use arguing with a feeling," said Teresa. "I won't go out again with Fairfax."

Basil took her in his arms, in a wave of repentant emotion.

"No, I don't mean that. You shall do just as you want to do. I won't deprive you of any pleasure, if I can help it. I believe you do care a little for me!"

Teresa smiled tenderly, but with a shade of melancholy. She did not like the interruption

of her friendship with Fairfax, which she felt was probably inevitable. It seemed, too, like a confession of defeat in the course they had meant their marriage to take. If they could not trust one another freely, if they had to take serious account of small things, and manage and humour one another, what became of her ideal of freedom and frankness? Teresa did not want to give up her ideas or her amusements—but neither did she want really to hurt or disturb Basil. The talk left her troubled and melancholy.

VII

BASIL himself saved the situation. That night they were going out to dinner, and in the carriage on the way he explicitly denied what he had said, pronounced it only a mood, and assured Teresa that he wanted her to be perfectly free, and not to give up the least of her amusements because of an unreasonable feeling on his part. He admitted emotionally that it was unreasonable, and stated his entire trust in her so convincingly that Teresa's spirits rose with a leap.

"That's all right, then—now we're ourselves again!" she said gaily. "I didn't quite recognise you in the rôle of Bluebeard! You give me *carte blanche,* and I promise I shan't want to look into the forbidden cupboard!"

"No, don't promise anything—except that you'll always like me better than anyone else."

"I needn't promise that—I can't help it. Life is so amusing with you, Basil! I feel so gay and young to-night—all the worries seem little things. The baby was so dear to-day—he's the most intelligent little thing, and so strong and alive! I'm going to model a little profile of him. Yes, he really *has* got a profile. And to think I

didn't want him—what a fool I was! . . . But there's a good side to not wanting things you haven't got, and idealising them, and thinking if you only had *them,* how happy you'd be. I've never done that. It always seems to me that if I can't be happy with what I've got, I can't anyway. And I do really think I've got all there is to get in life—all there is for me. . . . I might like a little more money—but nothing else!"

Basil held her hand clasped in his, and listened.

"You like excitement," he said.

"Oh, a little, now and then—a new dress, an interesting talk—— But I don't need much, do I, now?"

"I don't know. You wouldn't like to have anything cut off."

"Well, would you?"

"No—and I like you to be full of life, as you are. You wouldn't interest me half as much if you were different! You fascinate me, and always have. Only be good—as good as you can!"

Teresa did not protest when he rumpled her hair in a quick embrace. She laughed gaily.

"Life is good," she said contentedly.

The dinner was gay, and too large for general talk. Basil was near one end of the table, and Teresa near the other, with Fairfax beside her—a provision of the hostess. Teresa thoroughly

enjoyed her *tête-à-tête,* for it was almost that. She knew that she was looking wonderfully well in her white dress, but Fairfax's praise was none the less welcome. He was one of the men enamoured of women's luxury, and she was aware that he would have liked to see her each time in a new dress, and arrayed with more coquetry even than she cared to use. She laughed at this trait in him—it went with much else in his character that she thought amusing, but rather despicable. But she liked his more masculine side—his energy, ability, and clear-headedness. He talked about men and affairs with incisive force, and had a lightly cynical attitude toward life in general which went rather oddly with his devotional attitude toward women.

He was, at bottom, thoroughly conventional; and part of Teresa's pleasure lay in shocking him. He had from the first been amused and interested by the freedom of her talk; then he had taken to combating lightly her ideas; but as he knew her better, he became more vehement in his protest. He thought her idea of marriage totally wrong; and he had been horrified at learning the extent of her information about life in general, and Basil's responsibility therein. He, as Teresa pointed out to him, thoroughly agreed with her Aunt Sophy, that women should be protected as much as possible from knowledge—outside their sphere.

"Only Aunt Sophy thinks our sphere is politics, while you think it's domesticity," said Teresa.

"Of course I think it is. Her home and society—what more does any woman want?"

"Ah, society! When you take in society, you let in the serpent, and its wisdom! Unless you mean just an occasional tea-drinking, or a dove luncheon. Do you think if one's to have any relations with men and women one doesn't need all the knowledge possible?"

"You have your instinct—that can't go wrong," said the bachelor.

"Oh, can't it! You'd reduce us to the rudiments, wouldn't you? Why shouldn't we have the amusement of contemplating the world and people as they really are? It's the most instructive spectacle possible. I can never be thankful enough that I married a man who isn't afraid of reality, for me any more than for himself. *You* would shut your wife up in a toy paradise, with everything upholstered in rose-colour."

"There are a whole lot of things I know that my wife would never know, you may depend on that," Fairfax responded with emphasis. "What nonsense, imagining that a man's view of life and a woman's can ever be the same!"

"And can't one be supposed capable of taking to some degree an impersonal view of life? Can't

one forget occasionally that one is a woman, and be simply an intelligence?"

"I should say not! What do you make of hundreds of generations of inherited prejudices and ways of feeling, that colour your thought unconsciously? You can't get rid of that heritage for an instant. . . . You couldn't understand a man if you tried for a thousand years."

"'Wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother'! Do you think I shan't understand my son when he grows up?"

"No, you won't, and if you're wise you won't try. We like women best that don't pretend to understand us."

"'We'? Speak for yourself, Jack. There are plenty of men that don't believe in the doll's house. I shall see that Ronald Grange, when he grows up, has more modern ideas than you have!" And Teresa warbled frivolously:

"'Woman is the chosen
Ornament of home—
Man is what the beer is,
Woman is the foam.'"

When they talked ideas, they were always combative; and in his sentimental moods as well, Fairfax showed his conviction that Teresa was a charming creature, married to the wrong sort of

man, and in danger of being spoiled. Fairfax and Basil had never been more than mere acquaintances, and neither liked the other. Teresa understood that a mentally conventional man could never like Basil; and she was entertained by the attempt which Fairfax, like most of the men who had admired her, made, to manufacture domestic infelicity for her. They were so sure that she *could* not be happy with a man like Basil!

Fairfax on this evening was full of regrets for his impending departure. He would have to be away from New York for two weeks on business, he said, with a melancholy look. He was in a mood, half of pique with her, half of more liking than he had ever shown. Teresa often glanced down the table at Basil, during their talk, but could never discover that he looked at her. She thought he was looking tired and excited; and he seemed absorbed in his neighbour, a very pretty young woman whom Teresa did not know. Teresa had repeated to Fairfax Basil's comment on some remark of his own, and his pique was due to this.

"Do you tell your husband every earthly thing?" he enquired.

"Everything!" said Teresa joyously.

"And he reads your letters, too, I suppose."

"All of 'em. And I read his."

"You think you do, you mean?"

"Yes, I mean I think I do!"

"What childishness! As though two people could really keep up that sort of thing."

"Ah, but they can. And I assure you, it's most interesting."

"It must be. But do people never tell either of you things that are not meant for another person? Or don't you consider confidences binding? Aren't you two individuals at all, but only a corporation?"

"Something like that, I think. . . . And you know real confidences are rare—at least to me. I don't care about them."

"Then can neither of you have a friend whose confidences *would* be real, and whose friendship would be for you as an individual, not for you as a corporation?"

Teresa reflected.

"Isn't it conceivable that a person might care for you, and mightn't care for your husband? And that he mightn't care to be served up for that enviable person's further enjoyment? Wouldn't you have any loyalty to a feeling like that?"

"It's a difficult question!" sighed Teresa. "Why bother about such things now? I came in such a gay mood, feeling quite happy and frivolous! Don't spoil all my pleasure."

"I wish I felt happy and frivolous. Then I suppose I might add to it instead of spoiling it."

"Yes, you might. What *is* the good of being serious at dinner? And such a good dinner, too —but not better than our lunch the other day. I did enjoy that."

"Did you?" Fairfax looked a shade more cheerful. "I'm glad. Perhaps we can have another when I come back. And I'll be as frivolous as I can. I need to be frivolous if I'm going to amuse two people."

He came back to that again and again. He assured Teresa that her idea of marriage was totally wrong—unsocial.

"Marriage is an institution—a part of the state, of the organisation of society. Two people marry really for the purpose of helping one another socially, I mean in a broad sense; of bringing up children. The mere personal relation is a very small part of it. The feeling with which they marry, if they're in love with each other, doesn't last, can't last. It's bound to change. They ought to adapt themselves to that change, and make a broader relation on the basis of it—to take the family as the unit of their interest, not one another."

"I don't agree with you."

"Well, you will, some day. You'll find out that it doesn't work. Why marry at all, from your point of view?"

"Because it's more practical, and because common interests, and children, and common

social relations help the original relation—they're in the line of its natural growth."

"You want to take all you can get out of society, then, and not give in return?"

"I do give—I give children, for example. But my private affairs are no concern of society's. Conventions are only made to be broken. Why shouldn't I have my own way of breaking them?"

"If you hadn't this particular convention, then, you admit you'd be more a social being."

"Yes, but I shouldn't be so happy."

"You risk being very unhappy sometime. That's what it is to put too much stress on one special relation."

Teresa shrugged her shoulders.

"If Allah wills it," she said, and her brilliant eyes seemed gaily to defy fate.

VIII

TERESA, in a spirit of contradiction, and the heat of argument, had chosen often to exaggerate the completeness with which she and Basil carried out that idea of frankness. She was aware of Basil's silences; and she herself was not as absolutely frank and unreserved as she sometimes assumed to be; but this arose not from her wish, but from the impossibility of translating everything into terms of speech. It would have been impossible, for example, to repeat all of her talks with Fairfax, and as these became more frequent in the course of the winter, the impossibility of telling all led her to tell little or nothing. It was not, however, because she had anything definite to conceal; but that her interest in him—and he did interest her, as a type not very familiar to her—was to a certain extent counter to her interest in Basil. The extent was slight, and did not touch her real feeling; but it absorbed a good deal of her attention. Basil was working hard that winter; they went out a good deal; and they spent less time together than ever before. Teresa was less jealous of his time. She was a little more worldly. Insensibly some sort of a veil had come between

them—impalpable, not yet recognised by either of them, but the natural result of interests superficially divided. They lunched and dined frequently apart. Teresa ceased to question Basil, and though, of his own accord, he generally gave an account of himself, he made one important reservation. He was seeing Mrs. Perry often, and saying nothing to Teresa about that lady. Harold Perry, who played so small a part in his wife's drama, was away all that winter, looking up Aztec remains. Isabel, therefore, was free to investigate religion. But that interest was temporarily in the background. Basil had taken its place.

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One day he went to lunch with her, as he was expected to do several times a week. He had broken a dinner engagement with her two days before, at the last moment, in order to dine alone with Teresa; and the excuse which he gave did not satisfy Isabel. She was in the mood, increasingly frequent with her, of dissatisfaction.

"Well, you know," he said frankly, at last, "your friends bore me, Isabel. I'm older than I used to be, and I prefer my own sort of people. And you must remember that I'm working pretty hard, and that I'm often tired. When I'm tired I don't want to talk inanities."

"Inanities? Do you call Father Damon's talk inanity—or Madame Blaise's—or——"

"No, but those people don't come to dinner with you. I've enjoyed *them,* of course, but your crowd on Tuesday was quite a different thing—wasn't it now? You only wanted me to fill up a gap, to amuse one of the young women."

"I always want you," said Isabel. "But you aren't willing to come just to please me."

"I can't really please you by boring myself. You must remember that the time I can spend with you is limited. Why should we waste it in things we can't really enjoy, or in discussions like this? If you could be content to let me come just when I'm in the best mood, it would be better for both of us."

"I'm afraid I should see you very little then," said Isabel, with subdued bitterness.

"It must be little, comparatively, in any case. But there's no reason why that little shouldn't be pleasant. Really I can amuse you much better if you let me choose my own times and seasons."

"Amuse! I don't want to be amused!"

"Oh, yes, you do, Isabel," said Basil, laughing. "That's exactly what you want."

She was silent, and a look of deep melancholy shadowed her face. Basil saw it with discomfort, which he did not allow to appear. He began to talk about her plans for the winter, about a book which he was encouraging her to write. She had in mind publishing anonymously a

"Journal of a Woman of Thirty," and had showed him some loose pages of it which had rather surprised him by a certain gift of hectic expression. She had also gone seriously into charity work, had joined several societies, had set aside a tenth of her income for such contributions, and was looking about for some special work to do for the poor children of the city.

In all these efforts to fill the essential void of her life, Basil lent what aid he could. Her real suffering touched him, though her passionate expression of it often irritated and repelled him. There was no deep sympathy in him for people, like Isabel, ill-adjusted to life, with inordinate claims, with demands that seemed to him essentially unreasonable. The quality in himself which had attracted Isabel, his ability to be essentially content, what she called his happiness, was exactly what limited his sympathy, and his real liking for her. She was beginning to see that limitation in him, to feel that there was no place for her in his life. Passionately, all of a sudden, breaking in upon his talk about her work, she accused him of lack of spirituality, of essential materialism.

"*You* aren't interested in these things, in trying to make the world a little more tolerable!" she cried. "You don't believe in anything I'm trying to do. You take it only as another way

of amusing me! I cannot imagine, Basil, why I ever liked you!"

"Neither can I," he said readily. "Perhaps you don't."

"No, I don't, I don't like you! It is only another instance of my making a mess of everything. Everything I touch turns wrong. There are some people who are meant to be unhappy in the world, and I am one of them. I've never seen anything clearly in my life except that. It is not meant that I should try to live in the world."

"Perhaps it is not," said Basil slowly.

She lifted her eyes, full of a mystic questioning.

"You think so, too, now, don't you, Basil? You know you have always argued against that feeling of mine, and it was for that, I believe, that I loved you. I was seeking for something to strengthen me against that feeling, and I seemed to find it in you. I believe that's how it was. But *you* have only shown me how wrong I was in fighting against it. . . ."

She was silent, and Basil, too. This was the first definite reappearance of her old mood for some months, and Basil felt no energy within himself to combat it. His interest in Isabel had at all times been only a pale reflection of her feeling for him, apart from the impersonal interest which she discouraged, and his relation

with her had brought him more discomfort than anything else.

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Basil was not happy during that winter. He regretted the emotional complication he had been drawn into, and found the inevitable process of getting out of it difficult and unpleasant. The only cheerful thing about the situation was that Teresa apparently did not suspect it. And even this had a tinge of bitterness, for he thought that if she had not been absorbed herself, she would have suspected.

Teresa was absorbed—but not in any one person—only in amusing herself. She had never before been so gay. She saw many people, and gaiety made her more popular; she basked in the sense of being liked. She perceived that Basil was unusually moody, but now she did not always try to get to the bottom of his moods. He said that work and money were bothering him, and was no less affectionate to her, but rather more so.

Isabel Perry's demands ended by wearying him profoundly, and he came to Teresa for peace and comfort. But he had a grievance against Teresa, too, and this was that she now made so few demands on him. By way of attaining peace with her, he accused her of being more interested in someone else. The jealousy of Fairfax, which he had resolutely stifled

all winter long, appeared clearly. Teresa, with a shock, realised his unhappiness, and not knowing all the reasons, put it down solely to her own account. The complete story of her friendship with Fairfax made it clear to Basil that he was only an element in Teresa's enjoyment. Teresa tenderly admitted that her winter had been frivolous, and that she had neglected Basil; Basil protested that she had been quite right to have as good a time as she could. Then came peace between them, and a return of their old gaiety together. Teresa once more became accustomed to hearing how much more charming, how much more beautiful she was than other women. She took the other women as nameless abstractions, and smiled at the praise.

In the spring she knew that she was to have another child, and this one she welcomed. She wanted a companion for Ronald, and she now loved Ronald's baby graces so intimately that all possible babies appeared beautiful to her. Once more, and all at once, the world of frivolity fell away from her. For the time it absolutely ceased to interest her. Once more the special atmosphere, cloistral quiet of spirit, seriousness, and peace of mind, closed round her. She showed a quiet, dreamy happiness, for which Basil adored her.

They took for the summer a cottage in a quiet place by the sea, not far from New York, for

Basil was to do some work in the city. He was now doing real pot-boilers—illustrations for two books, and some magazine-stories. Teresa assured him that if they could only tide over thus the baby's birth—for they were in debt—next year they might live more simply, keep within their income, and then he needn't do that sort of work, which he detested.

They began the summer very happily together, Basil going up to town two or three days a week, for his drawings had to be realistic pictures of some aspects of the city. They thought they might keep the little cottage till near time for the baby's arrival in December. June passed sweetly and calmly. But at the beginning of July Teresa had a great shock. Gerald Dallas shot himself; and she read the news, a brief, bald report, in her morning paper.

She had not seen him for months, their lives had been completely separated; but her affection for him still lived, and revived suddenly under the sting of pity and self-reproach. Basil that morning had gone to town very early. Trembling and faint, Teresa dressed, took the next train, and went to the studio. She did not find Basil. A telegram from Isabel that morning had summoned him to meet her. She was in town for the day. Accordingly he was lunching at a restaurant with her, and being called to account for his various deficiencies, when

Teresa came to the studio. She hesitated a few moments, then scribbled a note and dropped it through the letter-slit, went down and found a cab, and gave the address of Gerald's lodging, taken from the newspaper account. The place was a cheap boarding-house, near one of the small squares in the lower part of the city. It was a broiling day, and the odours of poverty assailed Teresa's senses as she got out at the door and after some argument was admitted. In one of Gerald's two rooms she found a chattering group of women. One of them, red eyed and flushed, a tall, robust girl, who had answered her knock, seemed to be the mistress of the place. To her, Teresa, half dazed, said she was Gerald's friend, gave her name, and was ushered into the room, where the other women, silent now, stared at her curiously. The tall girl began to pour out a flood of self-pitying explanations, mixed with tears.

It had happened the day before. He had taken the time when she, Annette, was away at rehearsal. He had written her a letter, which the police had taken, telling her what he meant to do, giving directions about his funeral, and saying that she was to take whatever possessions he left. The letter had been brought to her by a messenger, and she had come back and found him dead. He had shot himself through the heart, lying on the bed. He had been ill for

several weeks, and she had had a terrible time of it.

Teresa went into the other room, which was darkened and hot. Annette opened a blind, and drew down the sheet from Gerald's face. Teresa felt suddenly calm and glad. She lingered for some moments, feeling tremulously the happiness of his peace, his escape from pain; then she kissed him on the forehead and went away, saying to Annette that she would come next day to the funeral.

At the studio this time she found Basil, that moment returned, and frantic with anxiety because of her note. She stammered out a few words in his arms, and fainted.

The summer was darkened for her by this event and by the physical weakness caused by the shock. Basil's devotion to her was complete, yet her prevailingly sad mood came to irritate him, since he felt she might shake it off by a sufficient effort. His remonstrances had no effect. Her melancholy and ill-health continued up to the time of the baby's birth, and were beyond the reach of her will. She was further depressed by fears for the effect of her state on the coming child. She felt, as she contemplated what was before her, that her strength would not carry her through, and she thought she might die, and feared it on Ronald's account. She

thought much about Gerald. She was sure that if he had known her condition he would not have dealt her this blow. But he must have known in any case that it would be a blow to her; and all life took a darker colour because of his inability to bear it.

In December Teresa was very ill. She went to a hospital, and there the baby was born, and lived but two days. It was a boy; and at her first sight of him Teresa thought she saw an epitome of all the sorrows of man. He was totally unlike her first child. His tiny face, with heavy, mournful eyelids, with strange, deep lines about the mouth, made him seem a creature as old as the world. To Teresa all the sad experience of humanity seemed foreshadowed or summed up in him.

He died; and Teresa's grief was passionate beyond the comprehension perhaps of any man. Basil, though sad himself, and full of sympathy for her suffering, could not understand its full extent. To him the child had never really lived; it was hardly more than an abstract expression of the terrible will to live of the unborn universe; an atom of the ever-pulsing energy which forced its way into the world, causing suffering and woe—all for a life of two days. But to Teresa the baby was a complete being, and she sorrowed for him as though she had wronged him herself of his life. And she sorrowed for herself, for the

joy, comfort, recompense, she had lost. She passionately wanted the physical presence of the baby, wanted to forget everything in such a half-animal, half-spiritual peace as its small, clinging life would have brought to her. She revolted against the uselessness of her suffering. She desired to die, and for weeks thought she might.

For a time she was indifferent to Basil, and even to Ronald, now nearly two years old. But she was cared for in spite of herself, strength began to come back to her, and soon she could go to the apartment they had taken for the rest of the winter. In the spring they meant to go abroad, Teresa and the baby first, Basil following as soon as he could get through some necessary work. He had still another book to illustrate—a book made up of magazine articles on the foreign quarters of New York. Basil despised the sentimentality of the letter-press, and promised himself some recompense in making his drawings as biting and brutal as possible. Teresa's illness had been expensive, and Basil had recently had to pay a note for a thousand dollars, endorsed by Major Ransome for a friend. Need of money drove him finally to agree to a demand which he had fought off for some time. Isabel Perry wanted another portrait of herself. She wanted it, Basil knew, simply in order to secure his presence at definite times. At first he

had refused flatly, and kept to his refusal for several months. But at last, in a moment partly of feeling for her, and partly of harassing consciousness of debt, he promised to do it—and when he had left her he cordially hated their whole embroglio.

IX

THE portrait was begun; and Isabel, having carried her point, became for a time extraordinarily sweet and docile. Three sittings a week having been conceded, she made no other demands on Basil's time, which he wished to devote, outside of work, to his wife. He made great efforts to divert Teresa, to induce her to go out, to make her take care of her health, which was re-established very slowly. She recognised his care of her gratefully, though almost dumbly, and tried at times to meet his wish, but an overwhelming lassitude of mind and body left her no energy of will. She wanted nothing except absolute peace and quiet, and Basil's keen desire that she should begin to live again interfered with her recovery. She began to feel that she should not get strong till she got away by herself, and at last expressed a wish to go at once to Europe. This was in March; but the dangers of the winter crossing for herself and Ronald, and her own physical weakness resulted in a joint veto of Basil and the doctor; and Teresa yielded passively. She lived on, therefore, in the apartment, seeing as few people as she could manage, not going out unless she was forced;

disarming Basil's impatience at her persistent negation by her extreme gentleness. She ceased to talk about the dead baby to him, because she saw he thought her morbid. Sometimes she thought that Gerald Dallas would have understood her, but there was no one else. Everyone else tried to amuse her. Fairfax came a few times to see her, but the great change in her, and her evident lack of interest in him, discouraged his visits. There was only Major Ransome whom she was really willing to see. The Major's wholesouled acceptance of woman, as a weak creature who must be coddled and indulged in her unreasonableness—rather amusing, in view of the two strong-willed women who had married him—somewhat comforted Teresa. But after all the Major bored her. She did not want him or anyone else, not even for the tiny Ronald, whose extreme vitality made him a too exact copy of Basil. Basil was not too cheerful at this time, but he tried to be. His intensely positive nature made him unwilling to accept grief as Teresa did. He wanted to forget their misfortune, to find again their joy in life, and to supply it meantime by interests which seemed to Teresa factitious and feverish. He was working hard himself, and as a last resort he tried to get Teresa to think of her work again. But her first essay with the clay discouraged him. She modelled in secret, only showing it to him when

it was done, a little statuette of the dead baby, as he lived in her thoughts: a tiny naked creature lying with relaxed limbs, its heavy-eyed, deep-lined face expressing all the pathos of life *manqué*. At Basil's almost weeping protest Teresa silently put away the little image, and did not touch her clay again.

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Isabel, in the second portrait, instinctively wanted to have expressed her charm as a woman —the thing by which she had tried to attach Basil, and, as she knew, failed. She had chosen a dress of black velvet, which in the evening brought out wonderfully the intensity of her hair and eyes, and subdued her Spanish skin to ivory. But the harsh light of the studio denied her all charm of mystery and suggestion; even as the keen reality of Basil's nature had stripped their relation of the romance, the sentimentality, which she had striven to give it, and brought out its essential commonplace. After four sittings under the painter's cool gaze, it became apparent that the portrait would have nothing of what she wanted. With her usual impetuosity Isabel expressed her dissatisfaction.

"Basil, you are making me out an old hag! I won't be painted like that, I'm not like that, I'm not ugly! You are doing it on purpose! . . ."

Basil shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't paint pretty pictures," he said indifferently. "If you want to be done all rose-colour and illusion, you ought to go to one of the lady-painters. You said the other picture was ugly, too, and yet you liked it—or said you did."

"It was different—it was not brutal like this!"

"Perhaps you can't judge it very well, at this stage."

"Yes, I can see what you mean to make it—something that I would never in the world exhibit, or even hang up anywhere. Perhaps it's because it's so big and—pretentious."

"I thought that dress demanded a big canvas," said Basil ironically.

He laid down his palette and brushes carefully, definitively, and said:

"We won't go on with it."

"I didn't mean that," said Isabel quickly.

She was standing near him, holding up the sweeping velvet train with both hands, on which the diamonds glittered coldly.

"No, but I mean it," said Basil.

She looked at him, dropped her train, and moved to put one hand on his arm.

"Don't be silly, Basil, or sulky. I daresay I'm wrong, and it will come out all right. I know I oughtn't to criticise——"

"No, it won't come out right. I was a fool

to undertake it. I didn't want to do it. I can't do a pot-boiler of that size!"

He smiled, took out his cigarette-case—and her hand slipped from his arm—and began to smoke with quick, nervous exhalations of relief.

"I'm punished," he said. "I started the thing to please you, Isabel, and, worse still, for the money. I felt like a slave. I don't believe I could have finished it. You're perfectly right to dislike it. Good Lord, how glad I am you dislike it! Now, if you'll forgive me for being a bungler and wasting your time, we can forget it. Do forgive me, will you?"

"I really don't think I shall," said Isabel slowly, clasping and unclasping her nervous fingers. "I don't like to waste my time, as you say. And I think it's childish of you to be so piqued by a hasty word of mine——"

"It isn't that, dear Isabel—it really isn't that, but something deeper—my conviction that I wasn't making a good thing of it, and couldn't. I haven't liked it from the start. I hadn't the mood for it. I couldn't *see* it. I didn't like that dress, for one thing——"

"Then why didn't you say so? You know I would have taken any other——"

"No, it was your choice, and I was trying to do this simply and solely for you, and that's the reason I've failed. I'm enough of an artist anyhow not to be able to do anything good

except for myself. I shall know that another time."

There was a deep suppressed bitterness in his tone, which indicated more than his feeling about the picture. Isabel was silent for some moments. In her thoughts, as well as his, perhaps, the picture symbolised a deeper failure. She moved restlessly, walked away from the easel, trailing her rich dress carelessly over a brush that had fallen on the floor; she flushed, bit her lips, and finally said sharply:

"I shouldn't think you'd like to admit a failure like this without—without really trying to do as well as you can by it—and by me. I want you to go on—perhaps the mood will come—if not, I shan't reproach you—and I shall have got something out of it—some satisfaction——"

"I can't," said Basil gently. "It's useless, it's only wasting your time—and my own. I couldn't let you pay me for a picture I thought bad. If I'm to do pot-boilers, they must be for people who honestly want bad things. For that you're too intelligent. Let's say no more about it, please."

"You will not, then, do what I ask, if only to please me?"

"I can't."

"Then you're brutally unkind to me."

Basil's face flushed darkly. In a flash of his quick temper he caught up a brush from the

table and splashed two blue streaks across the face and neck in the portrait.

Isabel burst into tears. She went waveringly toward the divan, sank down on it, and wept hysterically into a cushion. Basil, with his back to her, stood silent, passionately resentful; his fingers, clenched in the pocket of his coat, crushed a handful of cigarettes to fragments. When Isabel, finding that she was not to be consoled, stopped crying and summoned the remnants of her pride, it was still some time before she could speak. Basil was still immobile, and there was no sign of softening in his attitude. Isabel, as quickly as possible, took the course which her instinct pointed out as the necessary one. The silence had become terrible to her.

"I was wrong," she said dully. "I have been, I am, wrong. I cannot get what I have wanted. And it is not your fault. I was wrong when I said you had been unkind to me. Perhaps you might have been kinder—perhaps—but I think you have done your best. You aren't exactly a kind person. One must—just make up one's mind to the—bitterness of it. One must see—one's own folly. I have seen it—oh, I have so tried not to see it. I couldn't bear to see it. Now I shan't try any more. I shall—accept it."

Her head sank. She smoothed the folds of her dress over her knees with a slow motion. Basil turned toward her a tired, tormented look.

"Let us not talk any more to-day," he begged. "On my word, I'm done—absolutely done——"

"Yes, I'm going now. . . . And I shall go away at once—south somewhere, Florida, I think."

"You'll let me come and see you before you go."

"Oh, yes, I should like to see you once more. But no more scenes, Basil—I promise. Just a quiet talk—and then good-bye."

Her tone was dull and exhausted. She sat still, looking musingly at the floor, and Basil was about to go toward her when a knock sounded at the door. Basil opened. It was Teresa.

In the instant of greeting her, while he stood inwardly hesitating and blocking the view of the studio, Mrs. Perry rose and went quickly into the dressing-room. It did not take Basil more than five seconds to decide that he must let Teresa in, and he did so, flattering himself that his hesitation had not been noticed.

"You're surprised to see me, aren't you?" she said, smiling. "Are you busy? I thought, suddenly, I'd like to go out and dine to-night at one of our old haunts. Would you like it?"

"I would, of all things," he cried fervently. "Come in, Mrs. Perry's been posing. I'm free now, and we'll have a walk first, if you feel up to it. Are you strong enough? How's the weather?"

"Cold, but nice. I'd like a short walk anyway —I feel almost energetic!"

She came into the room, loosening her furs. She was dressed in black, which she had worn ever since the baby's death, and her face was rather thinner and paler than before, though the frosty air had given her an unusual tinge of colour.

In passing she glanced at the portrait on the easel and stopped in surprise.

"Why, what have you done?" she cried.

Basil wished he could have got the picture out of sight, but said cheerfully:

"Spoilt it. Too bad, isn't it?"

Teresa studied the canvas.

"A fit of temper? Of course, I can't tell very well now, but perhaps you were too quick. Still, you can always take off that blue paint, can't you?"

"No. I was working on the face, and it's all gone. It was bad—the whole scheme of the thing. I felt from the beginning that it wouldn't do. Of course, I'm sorry to have muffed it. But it's a relief not to go on with it, when I see it's a failure."

He spoke volubly, moving about quickly, putting away his brushes and palette; and finally he took down the canvas and set it with its face to the wall. Teresa sat down on the divan, and they talked cursorily for some ten minutes. Mrs.

Perry found some difficulty in dressing without a maid, and also she wanted to get rid of the marks of tears. In this she was hardly successful. Unfortunately she had no veil. When she came out finally, Teresa's first glance at her face resulted in a second quick scrutiny. The two women met conventionally. It was their first meeting for nearly a year, and whatever feeling of intimacy there had been between them had long since disappeared.

"Would you mind calling a cab for me?" Mrs. Perry said to Basil, after the first greeting to Teresa.

In her tone was a certain hint of imperiousness. Basil went out, with a naïve sense of escaping from an uncomfortable situation.

"Well, the picture has been judged a failure, you see," Mrs. Perry said rapidly, pulling on her gloves. "I'm so disappointed—I'd really set my heart on it. But I suppose there's no appeal. Artists have their ways of feeling about their work that ordinary mortals can't be expected to comprehend—isn't that true?"

"I suppose it is," Teresa said mechanically. "It's a pity. Have you wasted much time on it?"

"Four sittings—a good deal for a busy person like myself. But—I won't grumble any more."

"Basil will be sorrier than you, I'm sure. He hates to make failures."

"No—I don't believe he's very sorry. He wasn't interested in it. He'll never be a success as a portrait-painter, will he?"

Teresa smiled. "Not a worldly success, I fancy. But I don't believe he much wants to be."

"Oh, I daresay not. Only great painters were, weren't they? They all wanted to please a duke, or a king, or somebody. Of course, when a painter gets a big name, like Sargent or Whistler, he can have as many moods and whims as he likes; it only makes people run after him the more. I've heard so many stories about that Swedish man that painted everybody last year. He did about two portraits a week, and he said when he got back to Sweden that if he could have painted with his left hand he might have done two at once. He started pictures of all the De Morgan girls, and made love to one of them, and Papa de Morgan kicked him out of the house; but he insisted on being paid for all the pictures just the same, under threat of a lawsuit, and got the money. And they got him to paint the King of Sweden, and he painted him looking half asleep and quite idiotic, not at all regal. Then one of the princesses sat to him, and he came quite drunk and slapped off the portrait in no time. That's what it is to be the fashion!"

Mrs. Perry laughed nervously. Her voice had

a harshness characteristic of her in emotion. Teresa listened gravely, turning her muff in her hands. Her narrow eyes were coolly observant.

Basil came back and announced the cab, and Mrs. Perry nodded and said:

"Thank you. I'll send for my dress to-day. Don't bother to come down."

She advanced to shake hands with Teresa. "Good-bye—I haven't seen you for so long—I'm sorry—you're looking a little ill, aren't you? I'm awfully sorry. I shall be leaving directly for Florida, else I would come to see you. Good-bye—I hope we shall meet next fall, and you'll get strong and well meantime——"

"Thank you—good-bye," Teresa said indifferently. She had risen—their eyes met on a level. . . . Mrs. Perry turned quickly and went out.

X

"WHY was Mrs. Perry in such a rage?" asked Teresa calmly, as they walked up toward the Park.

She walked more easily, with more energy, than she had done for many months, and her face above the grey fur looked suddenly animated, though by no means happy.

"In a rage, was she? Why, what did she say? She didn't like my spoiling the picture," Basil answered off-hand.

"Was that what she was crying about?"

"She wasn't crying—Teresa!"

"She had been, about five minutes before. She was in a thorough hysterical passion. I'm not exactly blind, Basil."

"You're fanciful, like all women," he said uncomfortably. "Now, don't—please, dearest!—don't fancy things. You don't know how happy I am to have you here with me, looking like your dear old self again—I'm so happy that you felt like coming out. We'll dine together as we used to do—oh, how I have missed you, these last months!"

His voice shook, and he took her hand and put it through his arm. It was dusk. The

avenue was crowded with carriages, though the walk was comparatively free. In the clear frosty air the lights of the street sparkled and flashed gaily.

"Were you really glad to see me?" said Teresa slowly.

"Glad? If you knew how glad——"

"But you'd rather I'd have come a little later—after she'd gone? I'm sure *she* would."

Basil sighed impatiently.

"How long since you began the picture?" Teresa asked meditatively.

"Oh, only a week or so. I'd only worked on it four times. Thank heaven, I haven't got to touch it again! She's going away, and I hope I shall never see her again."

His involuntary expression was too unrestrained, too savagely convincing. Teresa was silent, and drew her hand away. He began to talk, too quickly, about other things. She answered in the right places, and he began to think the other question had dropped; but she came back to it abruptly.

"I see now what you meant by saying you had missed me these months. . . . I might have known that *your* life would not stop just because mine did. . . . I have been half dead, it's true, but you—you could not be. But I did not think it was *this*. . . ."

"You're utterly mistaken. Whatever inter-

est I had in her stopped long before. These last months—for a long time—it's been nothing but——"

He stopped suddenly. He had meant vaguely to express his weariness of the whole affair, but saw too late how it was committing him. He was not a practiced liar.

"Long before," said Teresa slowly. "You mean—before the baby?"

"Yes, I mean—oh, I mean she did interest me somewhat, as you know, at one time—some time ago——"

"Ah, it was then," said Teresa in a far-off tone.

"But it's nothing you need care about. I was never emotionally interested in her, if that's what you're driving at. I don't see why you question me. I tell you I don't care for her, and never did, except as a friend, a person that it was interesting to talk to occasionally. She *is* interesting, objectively—so much temperament and energy somehow gone to waste. But even in that way I'm not interested now."

"Why not?"

"Oh, because nothing interests me just now, except being quiet with you. I'm infernally tired. I'd like to get out of everything and go away somewhere and have nothing to think of but work—my *own* work, that I haven't been able to do at all this winter."

"I'm so sorry. But you're sure there was nothing else—nothing but friendship—nothing emotional between you?"

"Absolutely sure. Not that I think you've any right to question me like this, but I answer this once—there was nothing of what you seem to suspect."

"Basil, you lie badly," was her quiet comment.

"How dare you say I lie!" he burst out. "I won't say another word to you about it! First, you cross-question me as you've no right to do, and then you say I lie! I won't stand it."

Teresa walked on a few steps farther to a corner, and stopped.

"Will you get me a cab, please?" she said gently. "I'll go home."

"No, Teresa!" he cried wretchedly. "We can't separate like this. I can't quarrel with you now. Let us go and have our dinner—don't, don't quarrel with me, for heaven's sake!"

"I don't want to quarrel," she said in the same deadly quiet tone. "Let us go to dinner, then. But I'd like the cab—I'm cold."

In the carriage he felt her shivering beside him. She hid her face in her muff, and replied by monosyllables to his anxious questions. Basil had given the address of a down-town restaurant where they had often dined together gaily, and they had rather a long drive. When they

were seated at the table, Basil, worried by Teresa's deadly pallor, made her drink a little brandy. To his surmise that the walk was too much for her, she assented absently, and then said:

"But it is time I made some effort. I see that myself, now. Life does not stop for one. Life goes on. And one must live, too, while it lasts."

She spoke without emotion; in her neutral eyes, that rested everywhere except on Basil's face, there was a look of suffering.

"You need a change. I've felt it for some time, only you didn't seem strong enough——"

"If I don't get away now, I shall die," she said, in the same quiet way. "I shall start next week. I want to be away, alone, all summer."

"Alone? But you're not fit, Teresa——"

"Oh, you know I'm to be with Nina and her family—that's arranged. We shall go to some quiet place, where I can be at peace, and get strong."

"Alone, then, means just that you don't want me."

Her assent was silence. She looked away, at the faces of the other people in the room, and her face was quiet as marble.

Basil's head drooped. Neither of them had made more than a pretence of tasting their food. He began to make lines on the tablecloth with a

fork. After some moments she looked at him. She saw that his face was haggard, and pale under its brown tone. She recognised in its drawn look of nervous fatigue the accentuation of a change that had been coming about for some time, that she had noticed at intervals during the winter. At last he glanced up, and his eyes, that had always seemed to her so strangely young, now in their passionate misery sent a pang to her heart.

"Perhaps it is best for you," he said with some difficulty, looking down again. "Perhaps you will be better off, away from me. But it isn't best for me."

"For both of us, I think," she said gently.

"Not for me! I want you, I need you, and now more than ever. You could be a thousand times more to me now even than you have been. For this last year you've hardly been mine at all—you've been away in spirit—you haven't been conscious of me much of the time——"

"And, therefore, you took a mistress."

His fork dropped with a clatter on his plate.

"I did no such thing! But if I had tried to have—not a mistress, I couldn't—but some sort of active interest in my life, most people wouldn't blame me——"

"It was because I was so unhappy," Teresa said in her far-away voice. "Life seemed to have been taken out of me for the time. I *could*

not be anything else, do anything but go on from day to day. . . ."

"I know, I'm not reproaching you—and you don't understand me, either. All these months you only have been in my thoughts—you have been my only real interest, though I tried to be interested in my work. I've wanted only to take care of you—if you remember, you know that's true."

"Yes, you have tried. I have been a great burden."

"Never to me have you been anything but the dearest part of myself, the dearest thing on earth. Never a burden. I've often been sad because of you, but if you think I've loved you less——"

He could not go on. He took up his glass with a shaking hand, and drank.

"I can't understand," said Teresa, and her voice was a low cry of pain.

"I wish to God you could know every thought of my heart, every act of mine—then perhaps you would understand. You would know, at least, how I love you."

"But you can't tell me, can you? You can't tell me the truth about—this."

Basil was silent now. Uppermost in his consciousness was a feeling of unbearable fatigue, confusing his mind. He thought vaguely that if he had not been so tired he would not have got

into this intolerable predicament. How to get out of it he could not see. The impulse of confession was so strong in him that he had to fight it down consciously. He desired intensely to tell Teresa everything, to make her feel as nothing else now could, the real unimportance of his liaison, to himself and to her. But a feeling that he would be a cur if he told, miserably held him back. He had not yet admitted anything to her. He must deny it, not for his own sake, but for that of the other woman. Only he could not deny convincingly. His lies, he knew, must be half hearted. Each one put another barrier in the way of Teresa's understanding of him, given the moral certainty of the truth which, in some mysterious way, she seemed to to have acquired. How she had leaped to that certainty he could not see. In another woman her attitude might have been a ruse, but Teresa was not artful. She believed that he had been deceiving her, and was still trying to do so; she could not possibly know how essentially truthful, so far as their own real relation went, he had always been.

"You can't tell me—can you?" she repeated softly.

"I can't tell you more than I have already said. I've not been unfaithful to you, Teresa. This suspicion that you've got in your head is absolutely wrong."

"Will you swear it?" she asked with a faint mocking smile.

"Yes, if necessary. But you might be willing to take my word."

"No—don't swear—don't swear," she said musingly. Then she looked straight at him. "I'll ask you no more questions. It is finished. *That* leaf is turned down. One lives and learns —unfortunately. . . . Something is changed in me, Basil—this day has made a difference in our lives. I don't quite know what it is yet—I haven't got adjusted to it. It came on me so suddenly—like a physical blow."

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Basil violently. "But I know I've had as much as I can stand. Life hasn't been any too pleasant of late, and this caps the climax. I think it *is* better you should go away. Then, perhaps, I can feel like a free man again, and not like an infernal miserable slave!"

"Yes—poor Basil," said Teresa softly, mockingly.

"Have you had enough to eat?" he demanded, a flame of anger in his eyes.

"Oh, plenty, thanks. Pay the bill and we'll go. And give the waiter a good big fee. It's been such a pleasant dinner."

Basil did not look at her again till just as they were leaving the restaurant. He had sent for a cab, and now he said:

"You can go home alone, can't you?"

"Perfectly." Her eyes met his—wrath meeting wrath.

She drove away in the cab. Basil walked up the street, with wild desires to smash something seething in his mind. Brutal dissipation presented itself as a means of forgetting for a time the world and his tormented soul. He turned into a music-hall; and sat alone at a table, and drank three strong whiskies, and looked at the spectacle about him with haggard, forbidding eyes. In half an hour he got up and went home.

He let himself in quietly, and paused at Teresa's closed door. He heard her sobbing—deep, racking, choking sounds of pain. He turned the handle of the door, called her name. The sobs were stifled then, but he heard them still. He called her again, imploringly, angrily, pleadingly, and shook the door, and threatened to break it down. But it remained locked.

PART III

I

BEFORE Leonardo's picture of the Virgin, the Child, and St. Anne, in the Louvre, Teresa had lingered for some time. The expression of maternity in its two phases fascinated her; the caressing, youthful attitude of the Virgin as she leans toward the child, full of joy in its grace; and above all the face of St. Anne smiling on the two, with a whole world of sad and deep experience behind the smile. Teresa stood with her two gloved hands on the railing, studying the marvellous sweetness of that face. Her own was grave and wistful. She was pale and languid in the heat of the day; dressed in thin trailing black, except for the white gloves wrinkling up to her elbows, and she was alone.

She looked with sad eyes at the Virgin's face. There was happy maternity, physical and spiritual joy. Why had not such happiness come to *her?* Was it her fault that she had not desired her first child? Was it her fault that she had lost the second? Her eyes filled with tears.

She turned away, remembering an appointment with Nina, and came face to face with a man whom she had noticed vaguely as he entered the room, soon after herself. She had been con-

scious several times that he was looking at her rather than at the pictures, and that there was something distantly familiar to her about him. She stood looking at him, her blue eyes still misty with tears, her face perfectly pale under the thick bandeaux of her hair. He seemed slightly embarrassed, but there was such distinct recognition in his glance that she bowed to him mechanically. He came up to her at once, addressing her by her name, and Teresa gave him her hand.

"But you don't remember me, I see," he said, smiling.

He was of medium height, with a wiry, soldierly look. His thin face was deeply sunburnt; with its grave, intense eyes and impassive mouth that the slight black moustache did not hide, it was a sufficiently uncommon one; but Teresa could not place it, quite evidently.

"My name is Crayven—we met several years ago in New York," he explained.

"Oh, I remember perfectly—of course!" Teresa cried. "First at my house and then at dinner somewhere——"

"And then I went to see you, next day, and you were not in. You had told me I might come."

"Had I? Why wasn't I in, then? I can't remember, it's so long ago."

"More than three years. That was in April,

and this is June. . . . Are you staying in Paris?"

"Yes, for a week or so longer. I'm with my sister, Countess di Pepoli. And you?"

"I'm off in a few days for Switzerland, for a little climbing."

"That's odd, we are going there, too, but only to the Val d'Iliez, for the summer. Your route will lie quite differently, I imagine. I remember you were bound for the high mountains when I saw you last."

"Yes, but I shall be somewhere near you, as it happens. I'm going to Chamounix, and I have to meet my wife in Montreux in August. . . . You—forgive me, you're not looking as well as when I saw you. I hope——"

He stopped, and Teresa realised the meaning of his glance at her black dress.

"I have been rather ill this last winter—hence Switzerland," she said quickly. "My husband joins me there in the fall."

"Oh, I'm glad! I mean," he said, smiling, "so many things might have happened in three years! I didn't know if you were in mourning."

"Yes—so many things," murmured Teresa, absently. She was tired, unnerved by the heat; she felt the tears again in her eyes, and she stammered:

"I—I am in mourning. Six months ago I lost my baby."

"Oh," said Crayven, and she thought he looked at her strangely, uncertainly. She dried her eyes and added quickly:

"My other boy is with me here. He is nearly two and a half now. . . . I'm afraid I must go on—I've an appointment for tea with my sister."

Crayven's eyes were so frankly expressive that she added at once:

"Perhaps you would come, too, and meet her."

"I will, with pleasure. Thank you, very much."

She turned for a final glance at the St. Anne.

"I can't get away from that picture," she said musingly. "Her face haunts me. She has lived through all that young joy herself, and she knows what comes after it—all the bitterness, all the sorrow. She knows what is to come. And yet she can smile on youth, too, so sweetly. . . ."

She moved abruptly away, and said to Crayven as they went out together: "What was it that *you* came in to see?"

"Well—in this case, you," he answered with the faint embarrassment he had shown before. "I saw you in the cab."

"And recognised me, after all this time? Really? How amazing!"

"No—not so very. You see, in my life people count for more than in most. They take the

place of books and most other occupations. I never forget a face."

Teresa glanced at him with some surprise.

"I should not have thought that people counted much with you. I mean—you struck me somehow as a solitary person, one living apart from people. But after all, what do first impressions count?"

"They count much with me—for I have to act on them, generally, pretty promptly. I assure you, my life out there is anything but solitary. I have to deal with people every day—not in the afternoon-tea fashion, you know, but in matters involving life and death, often for them —and occasionally for myself."

He said it smiling, as a matter of course, and went on, as if it were a part of the same subject.

"I shall never forget my first impression of you—or rather the second, at Mrs. Blackley's. There was a radiance about you that night, a look of happiness, that one somehow doesn't often see."

"Yes. I was happy. . . ."

She said no more till Crayven had called a cab, and they were driving toward the tea-shop. Then they talked a little about Alice Blackley. Alice had not carried out her plan of invading the desert.

"I hope she has managed to amuse herself

elsewhere," Crayven said with a smile. "But I don't think there are many people who can make a successful business of amusement. There are a few—generally men. Women are too much handicapped."

"I know one who does—one man—my brother-in-law. You'll see him, probably, if you come to Montreux, for he'll spend most of his time there. You would like him, I think—at least people always do. He's the most invariably pleasant person I've ever known."

"People can be who live for pleasure—not only to get it, but to give it."

"Yes, but it isn't *all* they give," said Teresa.

In Nina, who was waiting at the tea-place —for Teresa was late and Nina was always prompt—Teresa now saw always the wife of the man who amused himself. And Nina was more a mother than a wife. Her blonde beauty, for she had been really beautiful, was now somewhat worn and haggard. She looked ten years older than Teresa, instead of the actual three. She was dressed—not exactly carelessly—but without regard to her best points. Her figure, badly corseted, was almost middle-aged. Beside her Teresa looked like a young girl. When the other two came up to her table, Nina was scanning a long shopping-list and counting the money in her purse with a worried air; and responding brusquely to the incessant questions of her eldest

girl, a sallow, deep-eyed child of nine. She put by her business when Crayven was presented, and made an effort to be social; but it was plainly an effort. Teresa saw that she was tired, and her mind preoccupied by the flood of grievances about the shops, and the behaviour of the French governess, and the fact that Ernesto would not come to Paris but had written from Monte Carlo for more money—which she had already poured out at luncheon. Ernestine, the little girl, sat silent while the tea was brought, devouring cakes and studying with her uncannily old eyes the persons of Crayven and Teresa. She was given a large cup of tea, and then began to ask her mother something, in rapid Italian.

"Speak English, child, I've told you," said Nina sharply.

"Oh, I thought," said Ernestine, slowly and distinctly, for her English was somewhat difficult, "that you said that Aunt Teresa said that she had no friends in Paris."

Teresa laughed.

"One finds friends unexpectedly sometimes," she said. "Everyone comes to Paris, you know, Ernestine."

"Oh," said Ernestine. She added, before her elders could fill the breach: "I wonder why my father doesn't come? He never *will* come when we're here. I wish he'd come, for he promised to take——"

"Never mind, Ernestine," her mother interrupted, and went on rapidly to say that Paris in June was intolerable and that the weather this year was worse than ever.

Ernestine looked sulky at being checked, and sat pulling up her long silk mitts with an offended air. She was dressed entirely in white, with a care which contrasted strongly with her mother's toilette. When she had finished studying Crayven, which took some time, she transferred her attention to her own dress and her fluffy, beplumed hat, reflected in a mirror opposite, and a ray of pleasure appeared in her small face.

Teresa watched her with amusement, shadowed by a certain commiseration for Nina. The girl was so absolutely her father's daughter, except for her sharpness, which was Nina's quality somehow translated into unpleasantness.

Ernestine, to Teresa, summed up all the difficulties of Nina's marriage. She was frail physically, and mentally morbid. There was almost no relation between the child and her mother, except one of conflict. Whatever affection Ernestine had was given to her father, and she had said once:

"When I'm grown up, I shall be exactly like Papa. He does have the *best* time. Mamma is always working and worrying, and Papa just enjoys himself. I shall be good-looking, too, like

him. Mamma looks so old and fat and never does her hair nicely. She never has any good clothes. Papa's boots cost eighty *lire* a pair! *I* shall have good clothes. Do you think I'm pretty, Aunt?"

"No, not exactly. You have nice eyes and hair," Teresa had said coolly.

"I have *beautiful* eyes—you know it. And that's the main thing. I know I shall be pretty."

"Is that all you think about, Ernestine—clothes and looks?"

"Well, no. I think about my animals—I have a King Charles spaniel and four cats. And I think about stories, and my friends, and about people a lot—what grown-up people do, and what *I* shall do when I'm grown-up. It isn't very amusing being a little girl—everybody thinks you're a stupid thing and always in the way. Mamma thinks I'm stupid because I don't do my lessons well, or learn the beastly piano. But you don't think so, do you, Aunt?"

"No, I think you're horridly sharp," Teresa had said.

"That's what Papa says," was Ernestine's satisfied response.

Teresa had perceived, at the end of two weeks' stay in Paris with Nina and her two elder children, that Ernestine liked her. The other daughter, Elaine, was a shy creature, always ailing, with Nina's blue eyes. The three boys, whom

Teresa had never seen, were already in Switzerland, with the second governess and the Italian servants. None of the children was strong. Teresa sincerely pitied Nina under the weight of this establishment, but she had declined staying at the Swiss chalet as Nina's guest. The hotel would be quite near enough. She wanted to be as much alone as possible, or with the small Ronald. She was longing now, in the midst of sultry Paris, for the mountains, the pines, the snow and rushing streams, and for quiet—above all, quiet. Nina tired her, with her incessant demand for sympathy or at least for a listener; and she thought she would be better able to respond to this demand when she herself was a little stronger.

Crayven, on the contrary, was a restful person; he gave her a foretaste of that natural calm and silence she desired. She asked him to dinner, at this first meeting, and then he took Nina and herself out to dine and, at Teresa's request, to a popular theatre, which reminded her of her slumming expeditions in New York. He came twice afterward to see her, during the week they had still to spend in Paris; quietly attentive to her, always looking cool and strong in the midst of the wilting heat; self-contained, not amusing exactly, but attentive, and an agreeable person to have about. When they said good-bye it was with distinct pleasure that Teresa found he had

advanced the date of his visit to her neghbourhood from August to early in July.

"But your mountains?" she said, smiling.

"Ah, mountains—they won't run away, you know. One can find *them* any time," he answered gravely.

II

THE Val d'Iliez seemed to Teresa a cool heaven, as they came to it after a trying journey. The quiet of that cleft in the brilliantly green hills, all one flowery meadow, with the misty wastes of rock and snow above, promised her at last the chance to rest and find herself. For this solitude was necessary. She could not help it if Nina found her rather unsocial, after so many years of separation, and resented her long walks alone.

Many hours of solitude each day she must have. Besides, Ronald wanted her. He was a shy child and did not make friends easily with his noisy Italian cousins. He was generally with her when she worked—for she had brought some clay with her and had begun with it immediately on her arrival, doing some little groups from drawings she had made long ago, and often using Ronald as a model for the child-figures she liked. Nina was busy all day long, organising her household and wresting supplies from the reluctant Swiss peasantry; finding out just where real milk and cream were to be got; telephoning for chickens to come by post; stemming the discontent of the servants; laying out a

régime for the delicate Elaine and the refractory Ernestine. But she wanted Teresa to come and be talked to, in the intervals of these occupations. It was Nina's impulse to pour out all her troubles to a bosom which ought from ties of blood to be sympathetic; it was Teresa's to keep hers to herself. Nina did not mind this, if she suspected it; but the deep melancholy which Teresa could not help showing, and which inclined her at present to a certain fatalistic view of all troubles, was not pleasing to Nina. Nina was an active person, who believed that all unsatisfactory conditions could be remedied, if only people had good will; and she spent her life in a constant struggle against the natures of the people about her. In this idealistic warfare she reaped the usual reward of militant virtue: one success for a hundred failures, and the consciousness of being the apparent cause of nearly all the unpleasantness in the family life.

"I know I have a bad temper," she admitted to Teresa, "but, heavens, what I have to try it! My only idea is to bring up the children properly and make them strong, and live within our income, so that they shan't be absolute beggars. But I know there are always debts that I know nothing about—always something going on behind my back, or under my very nose, that I can't make out. Of course that makes me suspicious and irritable. Ernesto never interferes

with my management, and yet he does work against me. The children see him always pleasant, always gay, making an amusement of life, and *I* am always the taskmaster. It's unfair—but I wouldn't change with him. I'm the important person in the house, and they all know it, and have to do as I say. And I do enjoy the children—only Ernestine is trying. She is all her father, but the others are more like me—except they are not strong. They are beautiful children, aren't they? If I can only see them well launched in the world I shall be content."

"Content? . . . And for yourself, Nina? You're young—you aren't much more than thirty! For yourself—what do you want?"

"What should I want? I've had my love-affair. You know how much Ernesto was in love with me. After the first year, when the children came, of course it had to be different."

"You mean you were not in love with one another any longer?"

"In love—no! How can one be in love after the first? Life is too prosaic—it burns out. He's fond of me—that's all."

"And you're resigned to being prosaic for the rest of your life?"

"My dear child, what is marriage? It's an affair of family, it isn't two people in love with one another. You don't see it when you go into it, but later you have to see it. You have to

realise that *your* life is the family, and that the man has his life away from you."

"I think you're wrong!" said Teresa quickly. "You gave yourself too much to the children. Sometimes I think it would be better if one hadn't children."

"Teresa! You don't think so! A marriage without children—you might as well be simply a man's mistress. . . . It's more you want, not less. It was a great, great pity about the baby, poor darling. You wouldn't give up Ronald, would you?"

"I wonder," said Teresa, "if a man one loved couldn't make up?"

"No! They're a woman's real life, children. Man's only an accident in comparison."

"I think it's the other way round."

"Then if you really think that, Teresa, you're more of a mistress than a wife. But I don't believe you do."

Teresa was silent again, for some moments. Then she asked reflectively:

"Could you have ever cared for anyone else—since you were married, I mean?"

Nina flushed deeply.

"That would be committing a mortal sin," she said, and her blue eyes shone with a cold light. Teresa looked at her, estimating the depth of the gulf that lay between them. *She* could conceive a mortal sin, but it was not love——

"Is it a sin for a man, too, if he is married?" she asked curiously.

"Yes, it is a sin. But it's worse for a woman. A woman *must* be faithful, no matter what the man is. She must hold fast to her duty—she must not even think a sinful thought—for women are terribly weak, Teresa."

"Not so weak as men."

"Oh, much weaker! For if their self-control goes, even once, they are never the same again. . . . Listen, I shall have to tell you about my sister-in-law, Edith, Egisto's English wife, you know. I've had a hysterical letter from her this morning, and she's coming up here. They've had a terrible row, and Egisto turned her out of the house. Once before the same thing happened and she flew to me, and I made things up—I got Egisto to take her back. And now she's done the same thing again, and he threatens to get a separation—of course they can't be divorced—and as nearly all her money is settled on him it will leave her in a terrible position. *That's* what women come to who don't run straight—even from a worldly point of view it's ruin for them. No . . . it's better to resign one's self to being—dull, I suppose you call it."

"I do call it dull, to have nothing but your house and your children!"

"Well, what are you going to do? You can't have affairs with men—you can't even have one

man to yourself. Your husband won't be faithful to you."

"I could never live as you do," said Teresa. "You've given up too much. . . . I must have my life—somehow——"

Nina studied her sister's brooding, vivid face.

"How like you are to father! You have much more of the Southern in you than I. You're made to be happier and unhappier than I am. I'm not unhappy."

"No—but I must be, if I'm not happy," said Teresa quickly. "What is life worth, if it's only to be got through, a matter of routine and duty, and always sacrificing yourself for other people? *They* don't thank you for it! I would rather die than live that way! I *will* be happy, somehow."

"Poor child," said Nina suddenly. "You're not happy now."

"No, but I shall be—I shall be!"

And she got up and moved away, to end the conversation.

She disliked having expressed even so much of her feeling. She disliked seeming unhappy. That was to confess failure, and she was by no means ready to confess it. She had a passionate conviction that things must still come right for her, somehow, and the impossibility of resigning herself, ever, to a grey lot like Nina's, was absolutely clear to her. She walked away now

down the path leading to the little Viéze, thinking of these things.

There had been a nominal, a partial and unsatisfactory reconciliation with Basil in the week before her hurried departure from New York. His evident misery had broken down her first stony resistance. She could not resist her own tenderness for him; all they had been to one another spoke too strongly; she could not part from him in unkindness. But the passion that flung them into one another's arms had not healed the breach, had only deepened the wound. Both knew it—both were unhappy. Something was changed, was gone—the old confidence, the old assurance. Joy was gone, and trust; and love, that remained, was bitter, a torment.

Basil had begged her not to leave him just then, to put off her sailing for a month at least.

"It's better we should fight it out together, now—and I need you, I want you with me," he had said again and again. But Teresa had only one idea—to get away somewhere, alone—to get away!

"I must go, I'm ill—I can't bear it," she had repeated. "I must get back my strength, then perhaps it will come right. I can't see anything clear now, I'm just one mass of aching nerves. Can't you see? If I stay here I shall only torment you and myself. . . . It will come right, if only we have time."

And she consoled him with vague hopes and hurried promises, with only one desire in her heart—to get away and hide herself like a wounded animal. It was a physical blow that he had dealt her, something that left no place for thought, that made her consciousness all pain. Talking only tortured her, she could not reason about it. She could not think, she could only see images and pictures that turned her brain. . . .

Now, in the solitude she had craved, she was beginning to think. What had happened, then, after all? Had he not, in spite of his passionate denials, been false to the spirit of their compact, to their egoistic, purely personal relation? Had he not shaken the foundations of that relation, and was not its whole structure falling in ruins? If so, somehow she must build up her life anew, without love, the keystone. Love, as she loved him, meant complete spiritual possession, complete confidence, or unhappiness. She would not resign herself to unhappiness, to taking up their life on a lower plane. She knew what would happen—she foresaw endless suspicion, sordid quarrels, "nagging." No, rather than that, rather than a constant demand for what he could not freely give, she would live somehow without him. But as yet she did not see how that could be done. She had left herself no substitutes. She had put too much into her feeling for him.

He represented to her all the charm of the soulless world, of godless nature. Basil frankly recognised no law outside himself, and the calm buoyancy of his egotism had fascinated her more volatile, more impressionable spirit. His tenderness for her had for a long time blinded her to the harsh side of that egotism. Now it had wounded her, so deeply that she could not yet see how she was to get over it.

She had had a number of long letters from him, and had replied briefly, ignoring his protestations. They were sincere, but she would not give them credit. There was only one thing that would convince her, and that was the truth about the other woman; and this Basil apparently would not tell. And it seemed to Teresa that if he would not tell, it must be because he had too much to conceal, even that spiritual infidelity which he had constantly denied. She did not believe that for a mere scruple of conventional honour he would imperil *their* relation, if he really cared about it. Her eyes narrowed ominously as in her heart she denied to Basil any lofty motive in his silence. Basil was not lofty, neither was he conventional. It was absurd that he should not have sacrificed the other woman; and Teresa recognised in herself a calm determination that he should still do so.

She sat on a rock beside the rushing, green, foamy stream, and contemplated herself as she

really was in spirit. She quite admitted that her own attitude was not a noble one. It would have been much finer to have taken Basil at his word, to have risen superior to this whole episode; it would also have been more sensible and more worldly—only it would have been quite false! Teresa had longings to be sensible and worldly, and longings to be noble. But more deeply than anything else, instinctively, she desired to be perfectly true to her own feeling; or rather she could not help being so. And her feeling was that Basil had carelessly broken something beautiful and beyond all price. It might not be beautiful from a high moral point of view; but it had been aesthetically beautiful. . . . Perhaps the barque of their happiness ought to have been capable of riding out such a storm calmly; perhaps it would have been better to have embarked in a craft of the ordinary pattern, with a thick, solid, institutional bottom. Only they had not done so. *Their* boat had been a racer, slender, carrying a press of sail free to all the winds of fate; and now, in the storm, one could not know how much damage had been done. . . . Teresa had a momentary vision of a derelict—mast and sails all gone by the board—rolling helplessly in the wash of the waves. . . .

She watched the green water leaping and foaming over the rocks, fresh from the snows above,

which lay shining, new-fallen, within a few hundred feet of the valley. The current of air carried down by the stream was inexpressibly pure and vital. The whole scene—the dark fir-woods, the bright green meadows, the great desert of rock above—had a wildness, a formless majesty, a primitive freshness, that soothed and quieted her mood. The rush of the water half-hypnotised her. Her thoughts became blurred. Her face, coloured by the keen air, was dreamy, and once her delicate expressive lips parted in a smile.

She was conscious that she smiled, though she hardly knew why. It was perhaps a mere sensation of physical well-being, for long strange to her. Already, after a week of mountain air, the weight of her winter's illness was lifted. She looked even vigorous, and there was still about her the suggestion of softness and luxuriance due to her recent maternity, unhappy as that had been.

She sighed, got up, looked vaguely about her, and walked on along the water-side to find Ronald. A shout announced that he had seen her, and he came scrambling up from a cove—a small, sturdy figure, straight as a dart, with a mass of bronze-coloured hair and vivid, intelligent eyes. He was a beautiful child, and Teresa's heart swelled with pride in him. She sailed his boat for him till lunch-time, the stolid Swiss nurse sitting on the bank like a meditative cow.

Ronald had his own ideas about the sailing of the boat, as about most other things in his life, and he infinitely preferred his mother's society to any other, because she was capable of grasping those ideas. He was not a clinging baby, but an an oddly independent one. He had never shown much interest in other children, not even in the smallest Pepoli, who was about his own age. He was obviously happier alone, when he was not with Teresa; and they were very happy together. . . . Ronald at the worst represented a certain amount of salvage from the wreck.

Yet Teresa had often thought of late that she and Basil might have been happier without children. Their troubles had begun with the coming of Ronald, and as she looked back to the first year of their marriage, it seemed to her to have an extraordinary quality of freedom and joy. It might be true that they could not have gone on like that, that life would have taken its revenge on them somehow for shirking the ordinary lot of care and responsibility. Possibly that sort of happiness, as everyone said, was not meant to last. Perhaps there was something trivial in it, unless one took it simply as a quality of youth, and let it pass, as others did, taking up in their turn the burdens of maturity. There was something in Teresa that echoed to this deeper and more serious note; but there was also a passion-

ate longing after that vanishing springtime, the efflorescence of all that was light and bright and gay. She was not yet ready to be serious like the middle-aged world, grey and sober, resigned to its losses. Nor did the alternative of frivolity attract her. She was not frivolous; she wanted what was real to her, what was deeply valuable, and she would have that or nothing. Basil had in him an element of frivolity, something that tended to dissipate what she regarded as her own peculiar possession. And she recognised now that what she wanted instinctively was to rule him, to impose her own more passionate will upon him, just because she was emotionally at his mercy. . . . As for the ideal of perfect freedom, that youthful dream, it was gone, swept away by harsh contact with the facts of life. Neither of them could be free. She was bound in spirit, and Basil henceforth should be bound by her will. . . .

III

NINA had not yet got her establishment thoroughly settled when, preceded by several telegrams, Edith di Pepoli arrived, with a mountain-wagon full of luggage. She came late at night and went straight to bed, where she stayed till four the next afternoon.

"It looks as though she meant to stop with me all summer," said Nina in the morning. "She said she was too tired to talk last night, but I shall have it all to-day, I suppose. Of course it's the best thing she can do, coming to stay with us, and I daresay she expects me to make it up again with Egisto."

"And shall you try?" asked Teresa.

"I don't know. One hates a scandal like that in the family, but as for Edith—really I don't much care on her account. She promised me solemnly, she swore to me, last time, that she'd behave herself properly in future—and now you see. I've no patience with that sort of person. A woman like that is no better than—than a creature out of the streets. In fact she's worse—for she has her position and her family to think of. No, I won't have her in my house—I won't have her here with my children!"

Nina flushed suddenly with anger and she

looked into the hall, where two men were struggling to get up the narrow stairs one of Edith's huge boxes. In this mood of righteous indignation Nina looked exactly like their mother, Teresa thought. All her puritan ancestry spoke in the cold flame of her blue eyes and the hardness of her mouth.

"Why did you make it up before?" asked Teresa in a low voice. The walls of the chalet were so thin, and noises echoed so through its low-ceilinged rooms, that she thought the visitor, in the room above, must almost have heard Nina's last incisive remark.

"Oh, because—because the family of course didn't want a scandal—and then Egisto is fond of her, in spite of everything—and she came and begged and pleaded—promised anything, if only I'd help her. But now I shall tell her—I really must tell her—that I can't have her here."

At tea-time that day Edith came down, and Teresa saw a tall, fair woman, very English in type, with a tea-rose complexion, large blue eyes, and light-brown hair curled elaborately over her forehead. She wore a loose, clinging dress of pale mauve crêpe, she was rather carelessly powdered, and her eyelids were pink. Her hands trembled nervously as she took her tea-cup, and she drank several cups of almost black tea, and then began to smoke. She pleaded fatigue as an excuse for not talking—a sleepless night in the

train, and last night, she said, she had not slept at all well, because she had forgotten her sulphonal. Her eyes looked pathetic, and if she had not been overperfumed and overdecorated with bracelets and other trinkets, Teresa would have thought her rather attractive. Ernestine, who sat on a stool by her aunt's side, was evidently fascinated. She studied every detail of the mauve dress and the curling hair with intent, yearning eyes, and Edith's tea-rose skin was exactly what, as Ernestine had told Teresa, she had often prayed to have herself.

Teresa felt that her presence embarrassed Edith, who had evidently counted on finding Nina alone. Nina too was distrait and bothered, and put wrong amounts of cream and sugar into the tea, and finally poured the cream into the tea-pot, by mistake for hot water. They all laughed at that, but rather lamely, for the situation was too obvious. Teresa felt a sudden keen sympathy for Nina, as she looked at her worried face, and a resentment against the blonde woman whose nervous movements made a constant little noise of rustling silk and tinkling ornaments. Why should *she* come to bother Nina, who assuredly had worries enough of her own? Would Nina be able to tell her to go? Could one turn out anything as helpless as that, with its sentimental blue eyes and tremulous mouth?

The two sisters dined alone that night at the chalet, as usual. Edith had gone back to bed.

"I've had a talk with her," sighed Nina. "I've been trying to persuade her that she ought to go to her relatives in England, but she seems to think that would be giving up any hope of Egisto —and the children. She has two, you know, two little girls, and Egisto has declared she shall never see them again. She's been crying—bawling rather—for an hour. She swears that she's quite innocent this time, and that Egisto's morbid jealousy has trumped up a case against her. And then she maundered on about this man, whoever he is, some Italian, and their beautiful friendship, which people *would* misunderstand, and so on. Of course, if she tells the truth, it *is* pretty hard on her. But then she's been such an idiot—worse than that, *criminal*—and even if she's innocent in this case, she deserves it all, I really do think. I was wrong, I believe, to meddle with her affairs at all, or try to help her—and yet I don't know—what can you do when a person comes and goes on their knees to you——"

"And what does she want now?" asked Teresa absently.

"Why, she wants to get back what she's forfeited—her children, her position in society. She doesn't care anything about her husband, but of course she can't very well get on without him.

She went on to me about his brutality—and it's true, Egisto *is* rather a savage. She's afraid of him, too—yet she wants him to take her back. I'm sure he won't, this time, however—so there it is."

"And what are you going to do, Nina?"

"I don't know *what* to do," Nina confessed, and her capable face was dismally bewildered. "If she really is a misunderstood victim, and all that, one ought to help her, if possible. I don't see how I can say to her that I absolutely won't do anything. But the awful thing is, I'm *afraid* she's lying. If she isn't, it shows what a fearful mistake she made in the first place, putting herself at Egisto's mercy. If he suspects her wrongly now, it's because he knows about the other time. Oh, let's talk of something else—I've really got a headache from it all. And then her crying, and that perfume she wears! If you could see her room! Littered from top to bottom with trunkfuls of stuff—corsets on the table, stockings on the bureau, hats on the floor, cigarettes everywhere, and a thousand bottles and pill-boxes—heavens knows what she *doesn't* take. Her maid can't pick up things as fast as she drops them."

They talked of other things, but inevitably the subject of Edith came up again. Nina was preoccupied by it, in spite of herself.

"She's very pretty," said Teresa.

"Oh, she has *that kind* of attraction," Nina answered disdainfully. "She's always surrounded by men, wherever she is. Really she cares about nothing else. And she sentimentalises over them all—talks about their souls and the higher life and so on, when really all that she *means* . . . I know, because she stayed with us one summer, and the other affair was going on then. I saw it, but I couldn't do anything. I talked to her, though. I warned her about Egisto. There's a bottom of savagery in all Italians, and it's dangerous to touch it. But she thought she could always manage Egisto. And she always had some fine phrase ready—she would wrap everything up in cotton-wool and make it look pretty. She told me all American women were as cold as ice—no temperament, no feeling. Well, all I can say is, I'm glad I haven't a temperament. I can't see what use it is to women. A little common sense goes a long way further, considering what we have to do in the world. I shall telegraph to Ernesto to come at once. He really *must* come, now she's here, and take part of the responsibility."

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A week later Ernesto appeared upon the scene, accompanied by four large trunks, his valet, and his usual air of bland content with the world, which recent heavy losses at Monte Carlo and even the domestic situation had not diminished

in the least. Teresa had not seen him for five years, and she found him absolutely unchanged. His slim figure was as graceful as ever, his handsome face unmarked by a line of temper or dissipation or thought. He was as careful of his looks as any professional beauty, and apart from this interest and the problem of enjoying himself to the utmost, Teresa had not discovered that he had an idea in the world. His coming filled the house with commotion.

It was a thoroughly Italian establishment—the servants informal, loquacious, and always in evidence; the children generally sharing the hours, food, and conversation of their elders. Meals were long and elaborate, and all the household business was conducted with what appeared to Teresa an incredible amount of noise and bustle. Each day Nina seemed to accomplish the task of bringing something like order out of a chaos of rebellious wills. Meals were on time, the children had their lessons, their piano-practise was regulated so as not to disturb Ernesto's morning and afternoon *siesta,* the quarrels of the nurse and the governess were settled with a firm hand.

But the question of Edith had first to be discussed, and the reluctant Ernesto was called into council by his wife. It appeared that Egisto had gone off to Sicily to look after some property there, sending his children to the care of the

old Countess di Pepoli at the family estate near Bologna. From Sicily he had written to Ernesto that he would receive no more letters from his wife, had requested that she should not be allowed to stay in his brother's family, and announced that on his return to Rome he should put the case into his lawyer's hands.

In the week that had elapsed before Ernesto's arrival, Teresa had seen that Nina was being gradually won over to Edith's side. She could not resist that desperate appeal; and the affair was something to manage, and Nina had stores of unused executive ability. Ernesto was non-committal, but with a bias in favour of doing what his brother wanted. He pronounced finally that Egisto, although a younger brother, ought to be allowed to manage his own domestic affairs, and that he did not think they should interfere. The affair was unpleasant, and Ernesto hated unpleasantness and bother. Nina began to argue strenuously with him, and several times Teresa was drawn into the debate.

As though she felt that her fate was on trial here, Edith levelled her batteries at Ernesto. Up to the time of his arrival, both she and Nina had come to dinner in tea-gowns. But now both dressed every night. Nina laced in her middle-aged waist and had her hair built up into an elaborate *coiffure*. And Edith appeared each night in a different dress, looking fragile and

filmy and pathetic, and using her soft blue eyes most patently. Two days in succession, also, she took Ernesto off for a ramble in the woods, prolonged beyond the tea-hour. And this procedure came near to undoing her. As Ernesto warmed toward her, Nina cooled. The balance swung the other way, and now it was Nina who declared that they could not keep Edith on.

Then came the day when Nina braced herself to the ordeal of telling Edith that she must go to England. The unfortunate result was a fit of hysterics so violent that the French doctor had to be called in; and he, after a long interview, pronounced that Madame was on the verge of nervous prostration and must be kept perfectly quiet, with, above all, no mental disturbance. In despair, Nina wrote off to Egisto the state of the case and told him that he must come himself and take his wife away. Then there was a period of exhausted quiet. Edith, having gained her point—to stay where she was till an interview with her husband could be brought about—allowed her nervous crisis to be calmed. And Teresa, to whom she had begun to talk freely, good-naturedly gave her a hint as to Ernesto.

"If you want anything from my sister, that isn't the way to get it," she explained. "It's Nina who decides things here, and to have Ernesto on your side will do more harm than good with her."

Edith's eyes widened slowly and she nodded.

"I see; jealous," she said after a moment. "Oh, what a frightful passion jealousy is! There's something so sordid, so mean about it! But I'll be careful—thank you."

And she was careful. She by no means gave up her intention of melting Ernesto, but she proceeded with a cleverness which Teresa saw and loathed. Ernesto was clever, too, after his initial mistake. He was fond of caressing his wife in public, and Nina liked this small change of affection. They were a rather oppressively domestic couple, on the surface. In Nina's place, Teresa reflected, *she* would have led Ernesto a life! She said as much to him one day when they strolled up into the woods together.

"I wish you had had the chance," was his prompt retort. "I shouldn't mind any sort of a life with you."

"Don't waste your gallantry on me!" she said, laughing. "Unless of course it's by way of keeping your hand in. I am cross with you, when I see what a slave you make of poor Nina."

"I make a slave of her! Dearest Teresa, it's she that makes the slave of herself. I've always wanted her to go into the world, to enjoy herself, to dress herself, to go about with me—but she will not."

"How can she, when you spend all the money?"

"But that's just it. If she spent more, I would spend less. She might spend at least half of it. If she were with me, I should not be so extravagant. But she always says she has no clothes to go to the places I go. Why doesn't she get the clothes? You see, she is what you call a frump."

"You horrid man! Why don't you try getting less for yourself and giving her the extra money?"

"She would only spend it on the house or the children. Besides it is not all a question of money. Your clothes—" he gave a critical glance at her white dress—"do not cost so very much. Yet you are always perfectly well dressed. That's what I mean by her being a frump. It's the way she puts on her clothes, and then of course she would not take care to keep her figure. It's a great mistake for a woman to lose her beauty. Nina was more beautiful than you—and now you are far more beautiful. You have gained greatly from your marriage. *You* have not made a slave of yourself, eh?"

"No. But then I have not five children and a husband like you."

"Like me? Why do you dislike me so much? I am like all other husbands, only better-tempered and handsomer."

"Conceited creature! What good does it do a man to be handsome like a doll? The ugly ones are much more interesting."

"I am not like a doll. And how do you know whether I'm interesting or not. You look upon me only as the bad husband of the good sister."

He cast a slightly sulky glance upon her from his dark eyes—eyes exactly like Ernestine's, deep and long-lashed. No, he was not doll-like. His forehead was broad and beautifully modelled, his nose strongly masculine; a short pointed beard and moustache hid the mouth and chin.

"No, not bad," she smiled. "Not serious enough to be bad. Only frivolous."

"Well, why not be frivolous, as you call it, though I am serious enough sometimes. . . . I suppose you mean I do no work, but what should I work at, and why work, anyway? What is there to do? *Il ne faut pas beaucoup pour passer la vie.*"

"*Beaucoup? Beaucoup des petites choses—pour vous . . .*"

"Oh, well, what is the difference, after all—big things and little things? It is important to pass one's life as agreeably as possible—*voilà tout.*"

"Even at the expense of other people."

"Somebody must pay the bills," said Ernesto blandly. "But after all one sees that they get something for their money, too. My pleasure is to give pleasure to other people. It is not my fault if the capacity for pleasure is limited."

"What a brute you sound when you talk, Ernesto!"

"No, no, it's only that you won't understand me! You know I am not a brute, a more kind person never lived than I am! I wish everybody to be happy, and so I am happy myself. What good would it do anybody if I were miserable? Why are you not happy, Teresa?"

She shook her head, smiling faintly.

"It's nothing you could understand, Ernesto," she said absently.

No man could understand—least of all could a Latin understand!

"I understand a good deal about men and women," he responded, nodding his head sagely. "Much more than you think. You have had a love-quarrel, and you're——"

"I'm what?" said Teresa, half offended.

"Don't be angry with me. I won't say it—I don't know you well enough yet. . . . Tell me, what is your husband like?"

"Oh, like all husbands, I suppose—only handsomer," said Teresa, laughing.

"Does he bully you?"

"No—perhaps I bully him."

"Ah, yes, you are a typical American! Now there is Nina, she bullies me out of my life. The worst of *that* is, one seeks to be consoled elsewhere. Eh?"

He cast a keen glance at Teresa, and she felt

the colour rising to her cheeks. She shook her head.

"Not to be drawn *that* way," she said. "Besides, I don't really bully him—I nag him."

"And what is the difference, please? To be nagged is to be bullied—it's the worst kind of torment. No man can resist it—*no* man! He will sell his soul to get rid of the sound of that voice, forever going on, forever——"

Ernesto switched off the tops of a clump of fern with his stick.

"Yes, I suppose it is pretty bad," said Teresa meditatively. "But I daresay you get out of a good deal of it by deceit."

"Deceit? But one *must* deceive! Can one tell the truth to one's wife? Not to a woman like Nina, at any rate—she has no idea of the world, and she is religious. And remember this—*'il faut la tromper, parceque'lle n'est pas de celles qu'on quitte.'*"

Again the keen glance, again Teresa's rising colour answered. He had a diabolical sharpness, this simple man! And the phrase had struck her deeply.

"I am not of that sort," she said in a low voice.

"Of what sort—the sort one doesn't leave? Oh, but you are—absolutely. And therefore *'il faut vous tromper.'*"

"It's the one thing I couldn't forgive—deceit," said Teresa, looking straight ahead.

"But why—when it is really a compliment to you? . . . For a man to tell his wife certain things, for example, he must be entirely indifferent to her, or she to him. Most things are not to be told. A man is foolish, he gets into situations where he can't help himself—or he gets fond of someone else—well, why should he tell his wife? It will only make her unhappy and make him deucedly uncomfortable. It can't be done."

"I said you couldn't understand," said Teresa.

"Oh, well, you will enlighten me sometime, won't you?"

"Never!"

"Oh, yes, you will—when we are really friends."

He took her hand and kissed it lightly.

"Charming Teresa! How pretty you are today! Don't wear black any more, I beg you, except in the evening. I love you in white. You look more alive now than you have since I came."

"You *are* enlivening, Ernesto—though I don't agree with a word you say."

"Oh—so long as you listen it is enough!"

IV

THE next day Teresa did not go to the chalet, but worked hard at her clay modelling. The desire for work was strong in her, pleasure in it had waked again, and besides she had a keen desire to make some money, to relieve Basil at least of part of his material burden. Her things had always sold, and she resolved now that she would if possible pay her own expenses and Ronald's. She blamed herself for not having done more the past two years. Her own small income had gone largely in dress for herself and the child; but now, with a little help, it would pay for this Swiss summer. Poor Basil, working in the heat of the summer city! But he had many friends—too many perhaps—who would take him out of it. Yet she knew that he was never as comfortable away from home. She had not been a model housewife, but Basil had liked his home. And he missed Ronald. His letters were full of inquiries and suggestions about the child—melancholy letters, sometimes short and brusque, sometimes long and argumentative. The first few had been love-letters, but as she did not respond in kind, Basil had become less expressive. Twice Teresa had written warmly, begging him to come as soon as possible—but she

had not sent the letters. The face of Isabel Perry had risen between her and the ardent page, and she had torn to scraps all she had written. . . .

In the afternoon she went out for a long walk alone. The day was clouding over. Mist hid the mountain-crags and trailed lower and lower into the valley. She walked up into the sombre pine-forest to a cascade that came plunging down in huge leaps from an invisible height. Beside the basin that received the final dash of the fall, in foam and roar, she sat for some time, the phrases of a letter to Basil shaping themselves in her mind. She was longing for him; a sudden piercing sense of loneliness made her weep. What did it matter after all that she was angry with him, that he had been unkind? Nothing mattered, except that they should not waste the days of their youth, apart from one another. It was far better to be together and quarrel.

Basil had been right—she should not have gone away from him. She should have answered his appeal. She had been wrong toward him in many ways. She had never of her own will sacrificed anything to their love—had given nothing but what she wanted to give. She had yielded too much to her grief that last year; she had not thought enough of Basil. What he had done was only what all men did. Men were cursed with a perpetual need of action. They

could not be quiet any more than vigorous children. The thing was to direct their insensate energising into the least harmful channels. She had never tried very much to direct Basil. She thought of him now as a small boy shut up in the house on a rainy day, and told to make no noise. Yes, that had been her attitude toward him all that last winter—and she had paid for it. She had given the other woman her chance. A sudden flood of rage against Isabel welled up in her and dried her tears. She considered ways and means of being revenged upon her. The blood beating in her temples told her how it was possible to stab, to poison, to choke a rival. Something wild rose in her, as a thousand times before, at the thought of their caresses, and all the softness of her mood was gone. The tender letter to Basil, like so many others she had imagined or even begun, was never written.

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Crayven arrived in a pouring rain, which continued for a week, turning the one street of the little town into a gutter of mud, and veiling all its surroundings. Teresa was perfectly aware that he came to see her, and she was inwardly grateful for his caprice. It was difficult for her to live without some society, and that of Nina, Edith, and Ernesto presented too many complications, while the few acquaintances that she had made through them did not interest her. Cray-

ven did interest her, largely because of his interest in herself. They fell at once into easy companionship, spending all the afternoons together, and the evenings generally at Nina's house, where Crayven made the fourth, instead of Nina, at bridge, which he played by turns very well and very badly. Ernesto, though greatly bored by the bad weather and the place in general, and threatening each day to depart, stayed on for a fortnight; by the end of which time the skies had cleared into delicious warmth, and all the charms of the valley were in full display.

Teresa's mood also had lightened progressively. With Ernesto no real companionship had been possible; he was at once too sentimental and too frivolous. Crayven was neither. Their talk was generally grave, but it stimulated Teresa, and she talked more than Crayven. She found his point of view, as she came to know it better, what she called appallingly middle-aged. Crayven frankly said that work was the only thing in the world that was decently worth while, and that work was only good for its own sake and without regard to results, about the value of which, in any case, he showed a profound scepticism. This was his attitude toward his own occupation, about which, however, he talked with interest to Teresa. He described to her in detail the place which had been for years—for at least three-fourths of each year—his abode, and where

he seemed perfectly willing to spend the rest of his life: the primitive old fort, buried in the desert, three days by camel from Suez. He told her about his daily work there—generally settling Arab quarrels about camels, with an occasional murderer to be tried, with an incessant effort to better a little the material condition of the natives, with a periodical Turkish invasion to stir things up. He was building a dam now, he said, which would for the first time give a decent supply of water to the settlement, and in which he was much more interested than the natives themselves. He had some fear of being transferred to another post of more technical importance, in which case the work that he had begun would go for nothing.

"The shiftless beggars would never think of going on with it for themselves," he said. "They'd let it go to ruin, and be perfectly content with the discomforts of their grandfathers."

"Then why trouble yourself to give them something they don't really want?" asked Teresa.

"Because I'm like all reformers, cursed with a certain amount of surplus energy which I don't know how to direct in a more reasonable way. It would be better to spend it on myself—except that there's nothing I want."

"And you're content to live out there, out of the world, indefinitely?"

"I only hope they'll leave me there in peace. It's world enough for me."

"But you do come out of it occasionally."

"Mainly because of the climate. In winter it's delightful. Then there are people one likes to look up now and then."

Teresa wondered if Crayven's wife was included in this category. He never spoke of her.

"It's a curious life," she said, absently. "But it seems to suit you, somehow. I knew when I first saw you that you had had some unusual experience."

He looked up at her steadily. They had walked far up into the pine forest, and were sitting on the bank of a stream, Teresa on a flat rock, Crayven a little way below. Teresa met his look, with a feeling of strangeness in its meditative intensity. It was familiar to her now, but there was something in it she did not understand. She had seen it first the day they had met in the Louvre, and then, too, had first noticed in his manner toward her the peculiar interest, the touch of emotion which had nothing of gallantry about it, that now she had come to accept as a fact, as yet unexplained. Their relation had leaped the stage of acquaintanceship, and oddly taken on the character of intimacy, but without confidences on either side. Crayven had told her nothing of his life, beyond the active phase of his work, and she had had no impulse to tell

him anything that counted in hers, but rather the contrary. He had tried to get through this reserve of hers, had tried to make her talk about herself, with an interest so marked that it defeated its own end. She asked herself why he should be so much interested, why he should have for her that grave, impersonal tenderness, unaccounted for by anything that she knew. It made her at times uncomfortable; yet on the whole she had a sense of freedom, of confidence, with him, that made his companionship a deep pleasure.

"Unusual experience?" he said musingly, echoing her last words. "No—not that, I think. The ordinary experience—youth and its dreams and ambitions—and middle-age and its acquiescence."

"Middle-age! You are young."

"I'm thirty-six. It isn't altogether a matter of years."

"What is it, then?"

"It's just that—acquiescence. Youth is the feeling of the infinite beyond the horizon—of our own infinite possibilities—the feeling that we may do anything, get anything we want. . . ."

"Yes, it is that. But, then?"

"Then we explore our possibilities and find their limits, and the world shrinks, and we see the stone wall instead of the horizon. And we do not beat our brains out against it. We acquiesce."

"And you think it's inevitable? You think it must always be that? We must be shut in by the stone wall? I would never submit to it—I don't believe in it!"

"Ah, you haven't begun to be middle-aged," said Crayven quietly.

"Don't talk in this way! Why do you want to take all the freedom and joy out of life? You enjoy your life—why do you deny the good of it? You're ungrateful."

"No—I'm not ungrateful. I take the pleasures of the day, and the work of the day, for what they are—that's all. I don't ask much of life."

"Why not? Why don't you? Because you haven't imagination enough—or because you asked too much—and didn't get what you wanted?"

Teresa's questions were impetuous, almost angry. They had never before been so personal in their talk, but often Crayven's attitude had irritated her into protest. With him she felt increasingly a passionate desire to assert the value, the joy, of life.

He reflected, looking up at her.

"I suppose I have not much imagination. But it is true that I did not get what I wanted. It's not that I wanted so very much—perhaps—from an abstract point of view. But I wanted what I wanted very much. . . . And to be beaten,

you know, does take it out of one. There's nothing left but a kind of inept cheerfulness, a prosaic, suburban way of living. You're out of it, and you know it."

"How can you talk like that—admit you're beaten! I wouldn't do it, if I were a man. How do you know you can't get what you want? I daresay you didn't half try."

"Oh, I tried," he said, very quietly.

"Perhaps you can still get it."

"No, I can never get it."

"Well—there are other things in the world, surely? You——"

"Yes, but there isn't much that I happen to want. . . . Just now I want nothing except to be allowed to look at you."

"And why look at me, pray?" said Teresa coolly.

"Because—well, because you are beautiful."

She looked away gravely into the depths of the forest. She did not like his last words. They showed suddenly a lighter attitude toward her than before. Her talk with him had been serious; he had not paid her compliments.

There was a change, too, in his manner, a touch of excitement about it. His simple friendliness was gone; gone, too, his quiet matter-of-fact English aspect, which had made her feel so safe. She saw suddenly the man as he had first impressed her—the stranger, of alien blood,

the unaccountable. She saw the desert behind him, a world of different laws and customs, of different feeling . . . and a strange breath seemed to come out of the burning sands. There were palm-trees, cut sharply against the pale horizon. There was a line of laden camels plodding through the sand . . . and then it was a night-encampment, the black tents pitched in the glare of the moonlight, and the camels snarling as they lay down beyond the fires. . . . Her eyelids drooped with a bored look, and she rose.

"It's getting late—I want to see Ronald before he goes to bed," she said abruptly.

Crayven leaped to his feet.

"Have I—are you—surely you don't mind what I said," he cried quickly, his face alive and keen.

"Mind? No," she answered coldly.

"But you do! Now tell me why—you mustn't be offended with me, I can't have it."

He barred the path, eager and determined.

"Oh, nonsense, let us get on home. . . . Well, then, if you must have what's obvious explained, one doesn't like to be turned off with a banal compliment when one is talking seriously. I know you don't want to talk to me about yourself, but there are other ways of making it clear, aren't there? . . . I shall be less inquisitive in future."

She walked past him, and heard him murmur to himself, "Child!" The word by no means lessened her feeling. Crayven followed, and on the walk back tried earnestly to make his peace. But it was long since Teresa had had a good opportunity of being unreasonable, and she seized this one instinctively, and with a sense of relief. And—besides—it was only on the surface that she was unreasonable. What Crayven had said was trifling enough, but the change in her feeling was not trifling. A delicate balance had been disturbed.

V

IT was after all an artificial balance, she perceived suddenly—the whole relation had been artificial. For three weeks now she had seen Crayven every day—they had been alone together every day for some hours. It had been tacitly assumed that both wanted this solitude *à deux*. It had been recognised that Crayven had come and was staying on Teresa's account, and she had testified with the greatest frankness that his presence gave her pleasure. She had not asked herself exactly what sort of pleasure; it had seemed simple and innocent enough.

It was impossible for her to live in isolation. She must have some intimate social relation, something that carried on from day to day, with a dramatic interest, with an element of excitement. Instinctively she desired to have things happen; calm was not natural to her and monotony irritated her. The same instinct that had led her to make scenes for Basil when the emotional tone of their relation showed signs of lowering ever so slightly toward the commonplace, was working in her now. And coquetry was working in her, and was stirred by Crayven's change of tone. Yet she was in a way angry with

him for the change; it was a shock, it revealed to her keen perception the truth that they had been proceeding on a falsely romantic basis. They had been living for three weeks a sort of idyl—practically alone together, strangers to one another, wandering in the midst of this wild, fresh, seductive nature, in a harmony of disagreement which showed the strength of mutual attraction. Conventions had been thrown overboard; Teresa had ignored the surprise and mute protest of her relatives. Here was a companionship which soothed and amused and pleased her, which satisfied her constant need of attention and interest, and in her present mood she had seized upon it as a necessity. From everything else in her life, at present, she suffered, in one way or another; she was bruised, aching, in mind and nerves. She consciously lived, really, only for her moments of lyric exaltation; the essence of life, all that was worth living for, might from her actions have been summed up in those moments, when a passionate fervour, a passionate delight in feeling, in the grace, beauty, and joy of it, swept her up, rapt her away. All pleasure had to her an element of intoxication, some faint reflection of the ecstasy of those supreme moments. Crayven had been a pleasure to her, apparently a calm, quiet, prosaic pleasure. They had played at being old, tried, staid friends. His inexpressive homage had warmed her in her mel-

ancholy; the wings of her spirit had begun to unfold from their limpness and flutter a little.

Now she saw why this had been. They could no longer play at being old friends. Crayven had abruptly changed the key of the tune; and *this* key once struck, one could never go back to the other. What then? . . . The first effect of all this was a feeling of loneliness, of intense, more bitter melancholy, which demanded relief. She recognised that she was deeply restless, and for the first time in her life inclined to be really reckless.

Something had changed in her, as she had said to Basil, long ago, it seemed. Something was changed between Basil and herself. She no longer felt that they belonged absolutely to one another. The bond that was too strong to break, that had been too strait to bear, was in some way loosened. She no longer felt accountable to Basil for herself.

She played bridge that night as usual—played absently and lost steadily—and when Crayven, walking with her to the hotel, suggested a walk for the next day, she said she had some work to do. He said calmly, "Oh, I'm sorry," and made no effort to persuade her. They parted coolly.

Early in the morning he went off for a mountain climb, starting with two other men in his hotel. They refused guides. In the afternoon,

when Teresa went to take tea with Nina, the little town was buzzing with news of an accident. It was late at night before the facts were known. Meantime Crayven had come back, alone. He had separated from the other two, who had insisted on taking a short cut and had been caught by an avalanche; one of them had been killed and the other seriously hurt.

That night there was a moon, nearly full, shining down from a cloudless sky on the jagged, snowy crests of the Dents du Midi, and touching the mysterious black shadows of the pine forests. Teresa sat on her balcony, watching, troubled in mind. Crayven had come to see her for a moment, having heard of the accident on his return. He had been grave but not moved, and in the shrug of his shoulders and the curt way in which he had condemned the foolhardiness of his companions she had read his indifference to one human life, as such, more or less. There had been a certain physical radiance about him from his long day above there on the rocks. . . . Teresa wondered why he did not go away, for the real climbing he had meant to do. These mountains after all were child's play to him, and she could not see what there was to content him in the quiet life of the valley. In a month or so he would have to go back to his post. Looking up at the cold mountain-peaks she pictured the desert—the rolling hills of sand, the noise of

the angry camels, the long march made on the Arab fare of dates and coarse bread, the blazing sun—and she saw herself there with Crayven. It was an image so clear, so vivid, that she shut her eyes and bowed her head on her hands. . . . She thought coolly, as she went in to bed, that when he did go, as he must soon, she would miss him enormously. The accident of the day had moved her to a keener feeling about him. If the avalanche had caught *him* instead of the two Frenchmen—no, she said to herself, it could not have made any great difference to her. All the same, she was glad that he was alive, and that she was to see him the next day.

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They started at ten in the morning for a long walk, meaning to lunch at a chalet up in the mountains. The day was glorious—clear, warm, and fresh. Teresa, in her short white dress, with a sweater tied round her waist—for they were going up into the snow—felt once more young, vigorous, and gay. She sang a little as they walked along the road between the flowery meadows, which the peasants were beginning now to mow—dull, unpicturesque figures, like automatons wound up to a slow, steady motion of the arm and the scythe.

"They are exactly like their cows," she said lightly. "It's strange they should be brutalised so by all this nature. It excites me, stimulates

me—it's so wonderfully fresh and full of life, this air——"

"Yes—but living in it forever, year after year—I rather think there wouldn't be anything left of one except the brute," said Crayven. "One could forgive the Swiss if they were nice brutes, like the cows. But how they drink!"

A look of disgust crossed his face.

"You hate drinking, don't you?" said Teresa curiously. "Do you never, yourself?"

"Never touch it. Why should I? Beastly stuff."

"I've noticed that you never take any wine or anything. Is it principle?"

"No, just taste. Don't see any use in muddling one's brain further than nature has already done it. My mother died of it—drugs and things. Went quite off her head, the last years of her life—lived in the dark, like a cat. Not pleasant."

"How oddly you English talk about your relatives!" said Teresa. "Now, if *we* have a person —not quite right—in the family, we try to keep it dark."

"Why? It's not your affair, after all, what your relatives do. Everybody's got some queer person or other about."

"You see, people like to muddle their heads," reflected Teresa. "Some of them have to do it —some of the best. A man, a very clever one, once said to me that some sort of 'dope' was

absolutely necessary, when one had once got one's eyes open. The strongest dope, he said, was religion. The others were love, work, and whisky. His was whisky—he said it was the most reliable. . . . Yours, I suppose, is work."

"Well, it isn't religion, love, or whisky," said Crayven drily. "But—yes, perhaps my work is that, to a certain extent. It keeps one from thinking too much. Out there in the desert one would get a bit queer sometimes, I fancy, if there weren't a perpetual round of little daily affairs to keep one going. . . . Yes, I suppose it is a dope. And yours—what is yours?"

"Mine? I'm not sure that I have one—yet. I never thought I needed one——"

"You had one, when I saw you first. It was love."

Teresa flushed hotly.

"It is not a 'dope'—it is the only real thing in the world," she said passionately.

"Is it?" murmured Crayven.

"It is the only thing that lifts one out of the ruck of the world, that makes one feel happy and free and alive!"

"No—whisky 'll do that," said Crayven. "It's but a temporary intoxication, in any case."

His tone was subacid, with all its lightness. It seemed to Teresa that he delighted in making her combative on this subject. He always watched her face when she asserted her belief in

joy, in happiness; when her cheeks flushed and her narrow eyes flamed.

"You don't believe that," she said suddenly.

"What does it matter what I believe? The grapes are sour—that's what it amounts to. I told you I had not got what I wanted."

"Ah, it was that, then," she murmured.

They were silent. The wood was silent, too, except for the rush of the stream, up the bank of which the road mounted steeply. Crayven walked with long, easy strides, and Teresa was always conscious that he was subduing his pace to hers. Mentally, too, he always seemed to be taking her pace, and not his own natural gait. He seemed to be following her, waiting on her mood, watching her. He had no need, apparently, of expressing himself—the essentially masculine need, Teresa had always considered it. She often found herself wondering what he was really like—for example, what woman counted in his life. It was not his wife, she was sure of that. Was it, perhaps, some Eastern woman, someone behind the veil? She had tried, but Crayven was not to be drawn on that point. His reserve irritated her, especially as he plainly wanted to find out all he could about herself. But just now he had said something that broke that reserve. She took it seriously, and glanced even timidly at his face. He met her with a long, grave look, which seemed to weigh her somehow.

"If I tell you something," he said, "promise me not to be angry."

"Angry? Why—what could you tell me that could make me angry? What is it?"

He smiled. "I know you will not like it."

Her eyes questioned him eagerly, but half-offended already.

"It's this. Ages ago—ten years ago—I was tremendously in love. And you are like her. That's it."

"Like her? How am I like her? And is that what you meant I should be angry at? I don't understand. How am I like her?"

"You look like her. It's the same type. It's quite extraordinary. Though she was blonde, rather—light-brown hair. But there's the same modelling of the face, the same eyes. . . . Is your family, by any chance, English, do you know? What was your maiden name?"

"Grange. My father's family was English. How odd!"

"That isn't the name—but there may be some connection somewhere. Her name was Mowbray."

Teresa shook her head. "I've got a family tree somewhere or other, but I don't remember all the names. Perhaps she's a far-away cousin. But it must be your fancy that I look like her."

"It's no fancy. I was struck by it the first time I saw you—still more so the second time,

that night at the dinner. You even wore her colour—blue. She was stronger, more robust physically than you, but you have the same look of vitality, of life. There's so much vigour in your face—and when I saw you in Paris you looked as she did when I saw her the last time. She was in mourning then, and sad—but one felt that she couldn't be sad forever."

He spoke quietly, without emotion, and seemed more interested in Teresa than in what he was telling her.

"But she—but why——"

"Why was it no good, you mean? Oh, it was very simple. She happened not to like me—preferred somebody else. Absurd, isn't it?"

"I don't understand that! She must have liked you!"

"You're very good. Or perhaps you believe that love wins love. It generally does. But in this case, you see, I didn't get her. . . . It was rather a knock-down blow. A man ought to succeed, you see, in that adventure. If he doesn't, he never feels quite sure afterward that he's the admirable creature he ought to be. Something has beaten him, and he rather expects to be beaten again."

"Again? But not in that way——"

"Why not? Does one love only once and forever? . . . That may be, I grant you, when from being in love you come really to love—when

habit and experience hold you to it. But remember, she never belonged to me. She was only a wonderful possibility."

They were in the depths of the fir-wood now, climbing steeply. Teresa paused for breath, and sat down, panting a little, on a log by the roadside. The stream hummed far below, invisible. Crayven lit a cigarette, first offering Teresa one, and stood leaning against a tree beside her.

"You were twenty-six then," she said, looking off into the forest.

"Yes, I was a boy. It was the time to love—I needed it, and——"

"Have you a picture of her?" asked Teresa, after a moment.

"Not here. I don't carry it next my heart."

"Was she unkind to you?"

"I didn't want her to be kind. I wanted *her*."

"I can't understand why you didn't get her. You seem to me the sort——"

"Women didn't like me then. I was too eager. I've observed that they like me better now—because I don't want anything much of them, I suppose."

"And you never have—since?"

He was silent, till she looked up at him and met his eyes.

"Not in the same way," he said. He moved abruptly, and sat down on the log beside her. "Not with the same belief and hope. That was

youth. . . . You—I meet you . . . and you happen to be married, you see."

"I? . . . Was she married, then?"

"No, no, she wasn't, then. But you are."

"This is a little difficult. You are married, too, aren't you?"

"Well, I am, I suppose."

He laughed and dropped his cigarette-end.

"But there are degrees in being married," he added. "I am married in the least degree possible."

When he *did* speak he was frank enough! Teresa felt he was moving now rather too rapidly.

"We were cousins," he went on calmly. "It was a family arrangement. I am sorry we have no children. It has been rather a failure—except that Adela has her freedom and can live where she likes. She hates the East, and, of course, it's no place out there for a woman—no theatres, no places to dine, no bridge—a savage place. Adela uses all her influence to get me into a better one, and I use mine to stay where I am. It's unfortunate she hasn't a husband that could be pushed on."

After a silence he asked:

"What are you thinking about—dreaming about? Your eyes are full of dreams."

"About what you've told me," she answered with a certain effort. "Come, let's walk on."

They were silent till they had passed the pine-

wood and come out into the Champs de Barmaz, a field shut in by a sheer wall of rocks on one side and on the other sloping up to the foot of the high peaks.

"Sit down a minute—you look pale and tired," said Crayven, gently. "I'll bring you some gentians."

He went off to a great patch of snow lying at the edge of the Champs, and Teresa watched his alert, strong figure with a curious feeling of disenchantment. So this was the reason of his interest in her—a fancied resemblance to a boyish love! He had said she would not like it—and she did not like it. Her vanity was hurt, and she felt suddenly remote from him, bored, and thought of Basil. Why had she buried herself here? At least with Basil one lived. Her quarrel with him appeared absurd. How foolish, in a world of such mischances and maladjustments, to throw away a day of happiness! Who knew what the next day might bring forth? Who knew what change there might be in Basil, when she saw him again? His letters indicated no change, but what were letters after all? They said only what one wanted them to say. She felt a sudden hatred of the casual, the meaningless, in human relations. Why waste time on people who, after all, counted for nothing? There was only one person who really counted to her, Basil. Why not allow, once for all, for a

certain amount of the casual and meaningless in *his* life—since men were made in such a foolish fashion? Why not forgive him his folly, as she did Ronald when he frescoed the wall-paper with ink, in pathetic male ignorance what else to do with himself? . . . But that woman! She could forgive Basil easily enough, if it were not for the insistent figure of Isabel—her eyes, her mouth, her nervous, seeking hands, her perfumes. . . . If only it had been a woman she did not know! She turned hot and cold with a desire to rend Isabel limb from limb, to crush her. She remembered women she had seen fighting in the streets in London. Happy world, where people could give their instincts full sway, where one could tell an interloper what one really thought of her! She remembered the last scene in the studio—that look she had given Isabel—with thirsty satisfaction. Isabel knew that she knew —that was something. But Basil must still pay the score that he had heaped up for himself by trying to stand between them—an absurd male buffer between two frank female egotisms which at least did not attempt to deny the obvious. . . .

She had forgotten Crayven, and she started when he came up to her, his hands full of the vivid indigo-blue and dark-purple flowers of the snow. But she smiled at him warmly and took the gentians with joy in their wonderful colour.

"How intense everything is here in nature!" she said. "What a flame in that blue! And even the dandelions are orange instead of yellow. And the green of the meadows, the green brook, the black shadow of the pines, and then that sky —what a day!" She sprang up. "On, on!" she cried. "I wish I could climb up there on those peaks, up into the clouds!"

"I'm afraid you'll find Barmaz high enough," said Crayven. "It's rather a pull, this last bit. Sure you're not too tired?"

"I'm not tired at all. And I want my lunch. Do I look tired?"

She did not, now. Her face was eager and full of life. They walked on rapidly. The road shot steeply up, then doubled and redoubled and doubled again on itself along the pine-clad rock. They met a dull-faced peasant coming down, leading a huge cow.

"Here, as Heine said of Göttingen, the cows are the most intelligent part of the population!" Teresa gasped, as they stood aside to let the animals pass. Then, getting her breath, she repeated a verse that always sang in her memory:

"'Mir träumte einst von wildern Liebesglühn
Von hübschen Locken, Myrten und Resede,
Von süssen Lippen und von bittrer Rede,
Von düstrer Lieder, düstern Melodien . . .'

"What melody! What a poet! How he

handles that German language of horses! What a singing quality in that

"'Myrten und Resede
Von süssen Lippen und bittrer Rede . . .'

He knew the touch of sweet lips and of bitter herbs! . . . I feel like singing myself."

"Do," said Crayven gravely.

"Not going up a hill like this! *Immer zu, immer zu, ohne Rast und Ruh!*"

She led the way, breathless, and Crayven followed, taking one long step to her two. The sun was hot on the face of the rock, but when they reached the top and Teresa sank down, panting and smiling, by the roadside, a cool wind met them, a rollicking wind fresh from the snows. She took off her hat and lifted her face to drink it in.

"Put on your sweater, or you'll take cold," said Crayven, standing before her with his hands in his pockets and looking suddenly stolid and British.

She laughed.

"How odd—when you give an order I see you are a real Englishman! Or, perhaps, it was the poetry I quoted, was it? . . . Don't mind me; this day, this air, has gone to my head! I *must* laugh—at you, at anything, at nothing!"

"Well, laugh, but put on your sweater. I hate women with colds in their heads."

He stooped down, took the sweater from round her waist and put her into it.

"Now, come on—you must have some hot milk to drink, or you may be a little dizzy. People often are, getting up here."

"Dizzy? No, I am only drunk with this air!"

But warned by a slight beating in her ears and temples, she got up and they rounded the corner into the plateau of Barmaz, dotted with cows and a few small chalets. A charging troop of cows drove them off the path. Crayven caught Teresa with one arm and swept her up on a hillock, and the cows tore past, their heads down, their tails in the air, their huge bodies gambolling wildly. Teresa shrieked with laughter.

"That's exactly how I feel!" she cried. "Now I know how a Swiss would look, if he ever enjoyed himself! But he doesn't—it's only the cows that are sensitive to the skyey influences!"

Crayven took her hand and led her down, still laughing, to the chalet which promised "*Bon repos*"; and ordered hot milk and lunch on the veranda.

"If it isn't too cold for you out here," he added.

"Not a bit—it's perfect," said Teresa promptly, establishing herself at a table.

But the waitress, with sloe-black, keen eyes under her scarlet head-dress, enquired if a room

inside was desired by Madame. There was, she said, a very nice private room. When she had gone, Teresa laughed again.

"One sees that we are on the Continent!" she said.

Crayven made no response, and looked gravely at her.

"How sadly you take your pleasure," she protested. "You haven't smiled since we left the Champs. I feel gay, light-hearted, for the first time in—oh, ages—you mustn't be dull! I've forgiven you freely for being interested in me only because I remind you of someone else. I'm glad if I give you any such pleasure. Now, don't spoil mine, will you?"

"I'll try not to, Teresa," he said, gazing steadily at her.

VI

TERESA'S pleasure was not to be spoiled. Crayven's grave mood only added to the wild gaiety of her own, which lasted all the way home. She drank from a mountain stream and sprang up, declaring that the draught was more intoxicating than champagne. She sang, running down the steep descent ahead of Crayven. Once she stopped to fasten up the loosened knot of her hair, and enquired with an elfish look:

"Do I remind you of anybody now?"

"You are like her," he answered coolly.

"And what was her name—you haven't told me."

"Rosamond."

"Rosamond! I have always liked that name so much—'Rose of the world'——"

She stopped, gazing at him with a sudden softness, a sudden feeling for his romance.

"Was she beautiful enough for that name?" she asked.

"Beautiful—yes, she had beauty—but there was a grace about her—everything she did was right, somehow. The way in which she finally rejected me was a model of its kind. She was a thorough artist."

His tone was mildly reminiscent, his look anything but romantic or sentimental. Teresa's sympathy was checked, and she walked on more soberly.

That night she was dining at Nina's house, with some of the French colony. She arrived a little early and went up to Nina's room. Nina was dressing with her usual rapidity; she never spent more than twenty minutes on a toilette. To-night she had not even given herself time to have her hair done by the Italian maid. Nonchalantly pinning on a coil of false hair, she said over her shoulder to Teresa:

"You must be tired from your day's expedition."

"Not a bit—I haven't felt so well for years. That air up there puts life into one, I've never known anything so wonderful! It's a pity you don't walk, Nina—you've no idea how delicious this country is," Teresa answered happily, contemplating her own long black figure in a mirror. She was wearing a gauze dress that she especially liked, and she had a charming colour from her day on the heights.

"Would you take me as third on your walks?" asked Nina, satirically.

"Of course—why not?"

"Don't be hypocritical—you wouldn't. But do you think you ought to go off like this, alone, every day? People notice it."

"People? What people?" said Teresa, disdainfully.

"Well, for example, Miss Melton stopped in here at six o'clock for tea, and said she had seen you coming down through the wood, with your hands full of flowers, your hat hanging on your back, singing, she said, like a dryad, or something of that sort. You can hear her saying it."

"What do I care what a sharp old maid says? What do I care about any of these people? They've nothing to do but gossip. I don't care one single——"

"I know you don't—but perhaps you—— Well, I've told you, anyway, what's being said."

"You have. Let us drop the topic."

Teresa serenely gave a last touch to her hair, and went downstairs, the colour in her cheeks slightly heightened.

She had been quite aware, before this, that Nina disapproved her walks with Crayven. Ernesto, too, had been for the first time sulky and cool to her. He had spent the last week at Montreux, but now he was back, and he met her in the drawing-room with a smiling compliment to her appearance.

"You look radiant—your long country walks do agree with you," he remarked, kissing the tips of her fingers in his most feline manner.

"Why are you trying to be disagreeable?"

asked Teresa with a direct glance at him. "Do you really want me to dislike you?"

Ernesto shrugged his shoulders.

"It isn't for me to choose. You do dislike me, or at least you don't like me, which is the same thing, or worse. You threw me over in a minute when this dear friend appeared. Certainly, I am hurt."

His deep, impenetrable eyes rested upon her sentimentally, with something of mockery in their soft gaze. Teresa looked back at him curiously, wondering what his mind really was like, and feeling tolerably sure that it was a sink of iniquity. Or, rather, after all, he was a thorough Italian—what else could one expect him to think? . . . The worst was, that Nina would think as he did.

Next day Ronald was ill. The child had strayed into a patch of currant bushes and gorged himself, and his carefully guarded digestion had succumbed to the sudden shock; he was prostrated with fever. Teresa stayed beside him all day, banishing the nurse, to whom she had given a furious scolding. In the afternoon Ronald wanted to be amused, and tiring finally of the clay animals which Teresa was modelling for him, he demanded "the Man." This was his name for Crayven, for whom he had had, at first, a great liking. Crayven had given him a number of toys, and played with him

delightfully, showing a genuine interest and pleasure in the child. But of late this had fallen off somewhat, and Teresa had more than one compunctious memory of Ronald's small, lonely figure and wistful glance as he besought her to come and sail his boats or "play horse," but was left behind while she went off with Crayven. His fondness for "the Man" had visibly cooled, and Teresa wondered what vague perception might be stirring in his mind. Ronald knew more than he could or would say, she was sure of that; this characteristic of childhood he had in unusual measure, being naturally reflective and reserved. Teresa now, as she poured out her tenderness for him, loving every lock of his dishevelled bronze hair, every movement of his dimpled brown hands, resolved to be much more with him in future. She blamed herself for leaving him so much to the nurse, whom she knew he did not especially like.

At his reiterated demand she sent a note to Crayven, who came over at once.

"I thought you might have been walking today—it's such wonderful weather," she said as she took him to Ronald's room.

"No—I thought perhaps you'd go out after tea for a stroll."

"I can't, I'm afraid. Ronald can't bear the sight of his nurse, now he's ill. I must stay with him."

Ronald greeted Crayven with a faint smile, and listened indifferently to remarks about his health and the advisability of letting currants alone in future. Then he said:

"Want to see the tick-tick."

Crayven took out his repeater and rang the hour, opened the case and showed the wheels. Ronald devoted ten minutes to a grave consideration of the watch, then said: "Show us the knife."

Crayven produced a bunch of gold trinkets attached to a chain; a cigarette- and match-case, a cigar-cutter, a pencil, and penknife. These occupied Ronald for some twenty minutes.

"Have you got the dog?" he enquired next.

Crayven fetched his walking-stick, the top of which was admirably carved into an animal-head, and laid it on the bed, saying:

"I brought this for you to keep, old fellow. It's yours now."

Ronald clutched the stick with an expression of such joy that Teresa had not the heart to protest, and smiled radiantly at Crayven, whose dark eyes softened oddly as he looked at the child and then up at Teresa.

"Now sing," said Ronald.

With a look at Teresa, Crayven said apologetically:

"Well, old man, perhaps your mother would rather I didn't. It makes a good deal of noise in a room——"

"Sing!" said Ronald, and his face contracted with a menace of tears.

"Oh, do, if you don't mind," urged Teresa hastily.

Crayven, with a deprecating smile, threw back his head and gave the Moslem call to prayer, in a clear, ringing, echoing falsetto, an astonishing volume of sound, penetrating, strange, dying away in a long melancholy high note. Ronald's face lit up with a look of perfect satisfaction; throwing out a toy elephant, which had occupied the post of honour in his bed, and putting the walking-stick in its place, he lay back on his pillow, languidly content.

"Aunt Teresa, can I come in?" said a small, sharp voice at the door.

It was Ernestine, befrilled and beplumed, bringing a bunch of flowers for Ronald.

"Oh, poor little fellow," she murmured, bending coquettishly over the bed to kiss him.

Ronald repulsed her vigorously and would have none of the flowers. Ernestine had once slapped him, and his dignified little personality had never forgiven the affront. He now began to cry with fatigue, and both the visitors had to go. Crayven said, as he took Teresa's hand:

"This is good-bye for a day or so, I'm sorry to say. I've had a telegram from Adela—she arrives to-night at Montreux for a few days. She's motoring about. I'm going down by the night

post. . . . I wonder if you and your sister and sister-in-law and Count Pepoli would come down for a day and lunch or dine with her?"

"I'll find out and telegraph you, or telephone," said Teresa.

He gave her his hotel address, and, with a melancholy look, and a long pressure of the hand, departed.

The meeting was arranged for two days later. Crayven had included Edith in his invitation, though he was ordinarily barely courteous to her. He disliked her, and her sad, melting smiles had impressed him in exactly the opposite way to that designed. He was, of course, not informed of her present circumstances, and therefore her attitude of the pathetic victim was lost upon him. It did not occur to Nina that Edith would want to go and lunch at Montreux. She had played the invalid ever since her nervous attack; appeared not to be able to walk more than a few steps from the house; and declared that because of Egisto's continued silence and his returning her letters unopened, she could not sleep a moment without the aid of drugs. Therefore, Nina was surprised and discomfited when Edith announced her intention of going with the others.

"I can't see how she can want to meet people —strangers—just now, can you?" she said to Teresa. "And I don't want to take her. There's a party of them—we don't know whom we may

meet—and it will look as though we'd definitely taken her side, if anything comes out—and I believe that's what she wants. Egisto would be furious if he knew we were taking her about like that. Ernesto doesn't want her to go. And it's foolish from her own point of view—her only chance is in keeping quiet. I told her that, and she cried, and said we treated her as if she were a criminal, in disgrace. Well, so she is."

"The world is hard on women," said Teresa, after a pause. "Poor thing."

"You mean *I'm* hard on her? But I——"

"No, I don't mean you, I mean society in general."

"Well, a woman can't be a fool, you know, without paying for it. We *are* held more strictly to account than men, if that's what you mean—but we all know it and know it must be so. I wish you'd talk to her, Teresa. She thinks I'm down on her, and Ernesto won't say a word. She'll take it from you—she likes you."

"Does she? I can't see why," said Teresa, reluctantly.

"Well, she does. Do make her see reason, there's a good soul. I'm fairly bothered out of my life. If she insists on going, I shall telegraph that the whole thing is off."

Teresa did not want the whole thing to be off, and, moved partly by this feeling and partly by pity for Nina, she went up to Edith's room. It

was midday, but Edith was not yet up. The room smelt of perfumes and cigarettes and the windows were shut, as there was a fog outside. Edith lay in bed reading the Confessions of St. Augustine, with her hair in curl papers.

"I've had an awful night," she said pathetically. "Nina knows I oughtn't to have any sort of disturbance, and yet she made a scene yesterday about my going down to Montreux. Don't you think it's unkind of her to try to shut me up, as though I were insane or something?" And her chin quivered piteously.

"All the same, you mustn't go," said Teresa calmly.

"Why not? Are you, too, against me?"

"You must do as Nina wishes, else she won't help you—and you need her. And if your husband heard of your going about like that, he wouldn't believe much in your—well, it wouldn't make him feel more kindly toward you, would it, now?"

"It isn't from lack of feeling I wanted to go. Heaven knows I feel things enough—too much. That's just it."

"Yes, I know, but I assure you, you mustn't do it. You mustn't offend Nina."

Edith looked sullen, and after a pause cried passionately:

"Shall I ever again be able to do anything I choose—or shall I be somebody's slave all my

life? Oh, what a fool, what a fool I have been —to let people get me into their power this way!"

And she began to weep again with rage and nervous misery, crumpling up the St. Augustine under her feverish, flabby body.

Teresa felt a shudder of pitying repulsion. How was it possible that anyone could so utterly go to pieces morally, could so sink to be, as Edith herself had said, the slave of other people? Weakness made one a slave, true—but not necessarily as Nina meant when she pointed her moral with Edith. Edith had been a fool—but she might have done whatever she had done, and not have been a fool. To love was not folly—it was only folly to be trivial.

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Two days later Teresa drove down with the Pepolis, and without Edith, reluctant to leave Ronald for a whole day, though he was now quite recovered, but unable to resist her curiosity to see Crayven's wife. It was hot in the plain, coming down out of the freshness of the mountain heights; and the little town of Montreux glittered meretriciously in imitation smartness, crowded in between the hills and the swimming turquoise-blue of the lake. The luncheon-party had the same air of smartness, the misfortune of which was that it, too, had a factitious air. Adela Crayven and her friends were all of the

same tone—a tone maintained as artificially as were their looks. They all had the air of existing on stimulants, of one sort or another, and of dreading a single lapse from briskness.

Adela was a woman who suggested forty years by the very elaboration of her youthful get-up; beautifully dressed, wonderfully cared-for, breathing a luxury which could never forget itself for a moment. She was tall and blonde, and her porcelain-blue eyes had a look of knowing the price of everything, and of being quite determined to have the worth of her money. She greeted Teresa without effusion, with a certain frank, amused curiosity; much in the same way she seemed to regard her husband, but without the curiosity.

Ernesto was in his element and happy, discussing the frivolous menu and flirting to right and left; Nina was out of it. Teresa, placed between Crayven and the other man of the party, a bald young man with a drooping blonde moustache and an eye as knowing as Adela's, but more languid, felt a keener liking, a keener sympathy, for Crayven. They two, after all, belonged to the same world—a world which ignored Adela's, as she ignored theirs. She was thoroughly glad to have seen Crayven's wife, to have this additional light on him, and to feel that he had wanted her to have it. The marriage itself was a mystery to her. Adela apparently had the money. *Why*

had she married Crayven? Why had he been willing to marry her?

Teresa was quite aware that her own position in the company was that of "Crayven's flame." Adela, no doubt, had heralded her in that capacity to her friends. She could see it in the eyes of the other two women—mother and daughter, with a puzzlingly equal quality of jaded youth. She knew that Crayven's plan for the summer had been altered because of her, and undoubtedly Adela knew it, too. Possibly he had been expected to join the motoring-party. That seemed unlikely, yet a few words of Adela's indicated it. Nothing, at any rate, was farther from his idea at present, as he plainly showed.

The luncheon prolonged itself in liqueurs and cigarettes till after three o'clock. Ernesto arranged that they should all meet again for tea, to the music of the band. Then he was to dine with Adela, who was obviously pleased with him; but Nina and Teresa started at six on their drive back up the mountain. Crayven said, as he put them into the carriage:

"They're all off to-morrow, thank heaven. I shall come up by the late post."

Next morning came a telephone message from Ernesto to Nina, ordering clothes to be sent down to him by special messenger. He was going off for a fortnight in the motor. Nina sent the clothes, and came to pour out her woes to Teresa.

"When he *knows* that we came up here only to have a cheap summer, and that it's absolutely necessary for us to economise! Heaven knows what he won't spend now—expensive hotels and cards and—— Did you see how that woman looked at him? She just put out her hand and gathered him in—and he, of course—*anybody* can make a fool of Ernesto! I must say, Teresa, I think your Mr. Crayven would do well to go and look after his wife, instead of——"

"Poor man," said Teresa feelingly. "It's quite evident now why he lives in the desert, isn't it?"

But Nina's sense of injury, though its expression died away inarticulately, remained. Teresa felt that she was blamed because Ernesto had gone off in the motor, whereas the real reason undoubtedly was that his domestic situation was uncomfortable and boring.

VII

THREE days later, without warning, Egisto di Pepoli arrived. He walked into the drawing-room where Nina, Teresa, and Crayven were taking tea—a rather short, powerfully made man with a ruddy face and gleaming black eyes. Teresa had never seen him before, but Nina sprang to her feet and cried, "Egisto!"

He kissed her cheek perfunctorily, bowed to the others, and said, abruptly, "Where is Edith?"

"Lying down with a headache," Nina said. She had turned quite pale.

"Will you tell her I am here?"

Nina went into the hall, beckoning to Teresa.

"Don't go," she whispered. "But do get Crayven away—there's going to be an awful row. You wait up in my room, will you? Don't go, Teresa—I don't know what will happen. . . ."

She seemed terrified, and was urging Teresa to take Crayven away, and not to leave her, when Crayven himself came out to take leave. His face was inexpressive, but it was clear that he had felt something of the situation. He went away; Teresa stood on the verandah for a moment with him, and promised a long walk next day—"if I can," she added absently.

His eyes rested on her with a look of separating her from the rest of the world—a soft, imperious look.

"You must come—I've only a few days left," he said.

Then he walked away slowly, and Teresa went upstairs. As she reached the landing a door opened and Nina came out with Edith. Edith passed Teresa without seeing her, and Teresa stared at her, fascinated. Edith was wrapped in a silk dressing-gown, her hair was carelessly rolled up; she had not stopped to think of her appearance. Her face was pale, her blue eyes looked intensely dark and large, her mouth was firmly set. Teresa did not know the flabby creature who had wept and hung upon them all. She held herself erect and walked quickly downstairs, and half-way down she turned and said with calm resolution:

"No, Nina, I don't want you."

Nina stopped, her hand on the railing, till Edith had gone into the drawing-room and shut the door. The two sisters, in Nina's room, could hear the murmur of voices echoing between the wooden walls. At first it was only Egisto's voice, harsh and vehement, pouring out a flood of rapid staccato Italian. Then Edith's, ringing and hard. Then the two together, rising in key, till what they said was audible. Nina shut her door and sat down, putting her hands over her ears.

"Thank heaven, they're talking it out," she said. "I was afraid he'd come up to murder her. . . . But, oh, the talking's bad enough. You've no idea what an Italian family row is like!"

Teresa got some idea of what it was like as the voices went on for an hour; Egisto's like a bull's bellow; Edith's breaking in, sharp and hard as steel, gradually predominating, bearing down with a sheer nervous intensity of will, under which, at last, the male violence sank into an exhausted mumble. Nina sat the whole time with her hands over her ears and an expression of such misery on her face that Teresa went and put her arms about her.

"Don't feel so about them—I daresay it will come out all right," she urged.

"It can't come right!" cried Nina. "She will get the better of him now—she'll get her way. But she's bad—bad!"

Suddenly the door below was flung open and Egisto cried out for Nina. She sprang up and ran downstairs. Teresa heard a confused murmur, then Nina called out to her to bring some water and the smelling-salts from Edith's room. She got a glass of water, but could not find the salts. As she came out on the landing they were bringing Edith upstairs. Nina was supporting her, but after mounting a few steps Edith's tall figure seemed to collapse. She wavered back toward Egisto, who was a step below, and with

an exclamation he pushed Nina aside, gathered his wife up in his arms and carried her upstairs, stumbling once or twice on her loose gown. Teresa saw his face, drawn and passionate; hate was in it, and a feeling stronger than hate. And over his shoulder, as he brushed past her, she saw the white face of the victorious woman—a cruel face, with lowered eyelids and contented mouth.

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That night Edith kept her room, and kept Egisto beside her. Her maid was hurriedly packing. They were to leave the next morning. Egisto had made his conditions. Edith was to go to the family place at Castiglione di Pepoli and live there with her mother-in-law, whom she hated, at Egisto's pleasure. She yielded without question, having won her victory; other things could be arranged later.

Nina kept Teresa to dinner, which neither of them could eat. Ernestine was with them, her cheeks aflame, asking inconvenient questions, which the governess pretended to repress. The murmur of those two voices, heard now from above, seemed somehow to fill the house. The closed room and its drama was in the thoughts of all, even the uncanny child was preoccupied with it. Teresa felt herself trembling with desire to be gone. An overwhelming sense of disgust was upon her. She fled as soon as the farce of dinner was over, and walked alone through the

fields in the soft night, where starlight, and the cool breath sifting down from the mountain-peaks, and the murmur of the streams, quieted after a time her racked nerves. It was not altogether clear to her why this event should disurb her so deeply, why she should so hate the whole affair and want passionately as she did to erase it from her mind. Above all she desired that Crayven should not know of it, and she wondered how much he did know. At least he would not speak of it.

But she knew what he would think of it, what Basil would think, what any man she knew would think—the light contempt that would be Edith's portion from them all. Men were harder on women than other women, she thought. No man was above taking his advantage from a woman's weakness—none that would not despise her for it after. Men were more conventional than women, she thought. Basil was conventional in that way, Crayven undoubtedly was. . . .

There was the other side, too. Women took terrible revenges. There were men possessed, as Egisto was, by a passion that carried hatred with it, a pure torment. There were women who reached out for men, captured them perhaps for a month or a year—as Isabel had done. Only in this case, too, the woman usually got the worst of it. Isabel, she was fairly sure, had got the worst of it. What could a woman do, in fact, and

not get the worst of it? Absolute faithfulness to a man meant being treated as Nina was treated, as—Basil had treated *her*. She stopped still in the middle of the road, her head bowed and her hands clenched in the physical suffering that always came with this thought. It hurt her too much—the sting of it had only grown sharper with time—and she saw that it might be a perpetual suffering, and that she could never get free from Basil, no matter what he did. He was to her what Edith was to Egisto—a passion—and she felt that she might hate him, too. One could not help hating unkindness, selfishness, hardness—and Basil had injured her, had made her harder and more indifferent about hurting him. No—more that that. She wanted to hurt him.

She walked on a few steps and stopped again, and repeated to herself, recognising it fully for the first time, that she wanted to hurt Basil. And it would be easy to hurt him—he had shown himself susceptible enough. He had even said that she could make him suffer infinitely more than she could suffer through him. The world said, too, that a man's infidelity was nothing; even the wife's pride need not suffer because of it. . . . Well, all that she knew was that she suffered, world or no world, convention or no convention—and that the pain of her jealousy was as sharp as her love of Basil's beauty. . . .

His face came up before her now, as she stood with closed eyes—its clear, vigorous lines, the beautiful mouth, the keen eyes and tawny hair. It seemed to her that a year had gone since she left him. All the same, she would not go back until. . . .

She went on, shaking her head; and moodily wondered, on a sudden, what was Crayven's real idea of her. She had not heretofore cared much what it was. She had liked him, and had taken him as an anodyne to her mental pain. He was the only person near her at present who did not throw her back distressingly upon herself. It was his strength that he was a stranger to her, that he gave her a new outlook, different ideas, and, perhaps, feelings. With him all her instincts for gaiety, for play, woke again. She had been conscious that she was charming him, that there was an emotional element in their relation, and she had done nothing to guard against it. Nina's protest was not necessary to show her that she had been unconventional. But she had a serene contempt for convention and, at bottom, in spite of her desire to be liked, for other people's opinion of her. In the people she liked, she counted upon enough intelligence to see her for what she was.

But after all, what did she know really about Crayven's intelligence? All that she did know of him went to show that his relations with hu-

man beings had not been successful. His love-affair—his marriage—both had been failures. There must be a lack of comprehension in him, of himself, of people, of life. His matter-of-fact bitterness, the aridity of his feeling about the world, showed that. It did not show lack of feeling—but disappointment, frustration. An emotion of pity and of tenderness for him stirred in her, and regret for what she felt had been her own egotistic attitude toward him. She had not really thought of him at all, but only of the pleasure he gave her. Now she began to care how she appeared to him, to care for his feeling about her, to wonder how far it was genuine, to desire that it should not be any commonplace sense of adventure that attracted him. She felt suddenly insecure, and both proud and humble—conscious of the faults she had shown him, no longer indifferent to his opinion of them, but not able to endure the thought that he should take her at anything but her best. . . . But what was her best, after all? Why should anyone seriously like her? She sat down on a bench by the roadside, and bowed her head in real humility. It was still early evening, and groups of people from the hotels passed by before her. Down the one street, in a glare of electric light, the band was playing sentimental waltzes. She felt suddenly very much alone, very small. "An egotist—that's what I am," she was saying to herself.

Why should anyone care for her—unless it were indeed with that *amour passion* which takes no account of liking or disliking, approval or disapproval? She had that feeling for Basil, and she doubted that he had it for her. What he had for her was really the *amour gout;* he found her amusing, he delighted in her beauty, he had tenderness for her, deep affection—but he had not the passion that could bind him to her beyond possibility of change. Here—here—was the reason of her intense feeling at the discovery of his relation with another woman. Instinct told her—had told her from the first—that she might lose him. Her jealousy was a spasm of fear. . . . She thought of Edith and of the look on Egisto's dark face. *There* was a man who was held—who was forced to act in spite of himself, against his will, by a woman he despised at heart. And it was in that way that she herself was held. There must be something base in such a passion——. But, no! something in her cried out—it was terrible, terribly beautiful, deep as the nature that held it, deeper than right or wrong. She had wished sometimes that she could kill her love for Basil—but she knew that with it would go her life.

VIII

"YOU might call it fidelity to type, I suppose," said Crayven, with an odd, twisted smile. "At any rate, there it is. I don't expect it to make any difference to you—why should it? You have your own life—happy, or at least full of interest. You don't need me. I saw that from the first. But if it had been different—good Lord, what a difference!"

"How different?" murmured Teresa.

"Oh, if you had not been bound—really bound—I would have taken you away with me. You would like the life out there—or if not, I'd have gone anywhere, done anything else you liked. I've money enough, and Adela—could shift for herself. I could divorce her any day."

Crayven's eyes gleamed hard and fierce. In emotion, the strain of un-English blood in him came out strongly. He was another creature. The imperious will to live and to enjoy, the unreflective, passionate surge of life, had broken up and swept away all the mask of indifference and control. His face was ten years younger.

Teresa looked at him, fascinated. He set a new world about her. The strange possibilities of life—the fact that all one's life might have

been different—might even be different—rushed upon her in a dizzying flood. *Her* world seemed suddenly to become unreal, pale—she lost her grasp upon it, in the feeling that another choice had been possible. And something deep in her answered to Crayven's emotion—a deep correspondence of temperament, some sort of inevitable affinity. And a wild sense of the adventure of life, a desire to set back once more the boundaries of experience, to launch into the unfamiliar, stirred in her.

"Strange—I *could* have loved you," she said wonderingly.

"Then love me! Good God! if you only knew how lonely I am—how stale life seems to me! I want a little happiness before I die!"

He was sitting beside her on the turf, and now he flung himself full-length, hiding his face on his arms.

Before them the green meadow sloped sharply to the edge of a precipice, below which, two thousand feet below, lay the valley they had climbed from. Behind them lay a tiny lake, fed by a glacier, and the sheer, naked, rough walls of rock, the untrodden peaks of the range. The horizon was one round of serrated peaks. They were in absolute solitude. Far below in the valley cow-bells tinkled faintly; and a swarm of insects danced and hummed in the warm sun over the meadow-flowers.

Teresa was silent. Clasping her hands about her knees she gazed inscrutably at the blue cone of a mountain that rose in France. The sun burned her shoulders, the distant snow sparkled coolly, a light wind swept the feathery tops of the grass and the purple hare-bells.

"What a delicious day," she said vaguely.

Then, after a silence, how long it was she did not know, she said:

"I wish I could."

At last Crayven moved, sat up, took out his cigarette-case.

"Will you have one?" he said with a tired smile.

She looked at his eyes—there had been tears in them—and bent forward and kissed him.

"I do love you," she said softly.

"Ah, yes," he murmured resignedly. "That way."

"That way? Are there so many ways, then?"

"There's only one way. Either it is that or it isn't. . . . But I knew it from the first. I saw that you were satisfied."

"Satisfied! I'm anything but that."

"Oh, you may not be happy, but you're satisfied. You have no need of anyone. . . . And I think it was partly that that attracted me in you—that's the irony of my fate! There's nothing beautiful about a need—unless one happens to have the response to it. It's absurd to

be hungry, at my time of life. Don't you find me very absurd?"

"I find you very—appealing."

"Oh," he murmured. "It's hard to be absurd twice over."

"Oh, it's life that's absurd. There's such horrid waste in it," said Teresa, almost angrily. "I don't see why one shouldn't love where one likes."

"Because love's like hunger. When it's satisfied you're not hungry any more, that's all. Brown bread and cheese may satisfy you—and then it doesn't matter if Lucullus asks you to dinner—I don't mean that I'm Lucullus! . . . We can't bear loneliness, any of us. Do you remember Maupassant's 'Solitude'? It's that solitude that we're driven at any cost to get away from. We can't stand too much of ourselves. We must have somebody who answers us . . . and most of us never find that person. But you've found it."

"Have I? I don't know. I thought I had. But who really knows or understands another person, after all?"

"Not all at once. But it comes. And the process of finding out is interesting."

"Not always pleasant. There are some things one would prefer not to find out."

"What things, for example?"

"Well—other women."

"But there are always other women. Man isn't a monogamous animal. How little they count, though, when there's the one! Don't you know that, you foolish, adorable child?"

"They count to the one," said Teresa, moodily.

"Surely it's what they count for to the man that matters."

"Well, how is one to know how much they count for? Of course, he always says it's nothing."

"And very likely he tells the truth. But you never will understand. . . . So you have quarrelled with him?"

"Yes, I have quarrelled."

"Foolish creature! Why should you care? You must always be the main one. No man could ever get tired of you."

"I don't care about being the favourite in a harem. I wish I were like him."

"You *are* foolish. . . . But you'll work out of it all right. I wish—look here, Teresa, do you know what made me half-wild to-day? For I *was*. . . . I've had despatches—there's trouble threatening out there, and I shall have to go back, any moment. I wish I could take you with me. Not exactly where the Turks may come down on us any minute—but I'd like to carry you off where he'd never find you. Why do you happen to be in love with him? I'd bolt the Turks, and we'd be off to the South Seas somewhere." Cray-

ven laughed excitedly, and took her hand and kissed it. "Never mind, I shall take what I can get! You do like me, don't you?"

"Very much. I should like to run away with you, Turks or no Turks."

"Reckless Teresa! Would *he* mind your liking me, even as much as you do? Is he jealous?"

"He'd mind enormously, if he knew how much I like you. That's one reason I like to do it. I shall tell him."

"You will?" said Crayven drily. "Then why shouldn't you have more to tell? If I'm to be the instrument of chastisement for an erring husband, let me at least be an effective one."

"Oh, if you're going to be sarcastic at my expense, I shall go home."

Teresa sprang up and turned to look at the glacier and the towering rocks, among whose peaks a few fleecy clouds were tangled.

"I shall not go back by that tiresome path," she said. "I want to cut across there."

She pointed to a spur of the hill up which a trail had been worn by falling water.

"It's steeper than it looks. Much better stick to the beaten path."

"I'm tired of the beaten path! Come along."

Crayven rose slowly and followed.

"I'll come along. But I warn you, you may get into difficulties. That's all sliding slate above."

"I thought you were a mountaineer!"

"I am. That's why I know that a path is better than an apparently easy short-cut—especially for a woman. Suppose you sprain your ankle on that slate? I should have to carry you all the way back to Anthemoz. Do you realise how lonely it is here? There isn't a human being within two miles of us." He came close to her. His eyes still burned with an excited fire.

"Don't be foolish," he said in a low voice. "I shall go where you lead. I'm not your lord and master."

"I have none—never had," said Teresa firmly. "Come."

She hurried on to the beginning of the sharp ascent, and began to climb, catching at tufts of coarse grass to help herself up. Soon there was no more grass—nothing but loose stones and crumbling slate. But she went on, with determination and a sense of joy in her recklessness. What had looked like an easy ascent now towered above her, straight up, a wall of rock covered with treacherous débris. She turned, bracing herself carefully, and looked down. Crayven was just behind her. Over his shoulder she caught a sudden glimpse of the abyss that seemed to open below them—there seemed nothing to stop the fall—and the circle of mountain-peaks swam before her eyes.

"Dizzy? Want to come down?" he enquired.

His smile irritated her, and she turned and went on, choosing a difficult and uncertain foothold with each step. A little further above, the mild eminence which had lured her on suddenly reared a vertical surface, as high again as the distance she had climbed. She looked, aghast, her foot slipped and she went sliding down on a fall of loose slate. Crayven caught her, but he, too, slipped down a dozen feet, and they just saved themselves, clinging flat on the treacherous surface, from a bad fall. They had no alpenstocks, for the climb, except for this deviation of Teresa's, was an easy one. Crayven cautiously lifted himself, found a firm point of rock, and helped Teresa to her feet.

"Give me your hand, and come down," he said sharply.

"Oh, please, let me do it by myself! I can get down—and I'm afraid of making you slip——" she said, rather frightened.

"Give me your hand!"

She obeyed. The descent was much more difficult than the climb. Looking down, the height was a dizzy one, and each step had to be taken with slow care, Crayven half-supporting her. Even so she reached the bottom with her dress stained with dirt and grass, her arms stained, her hands scratched by the rough stones. She sank down on the ground, her head swimming.

"Horrid little thing!" she cried. "Who would have thought it was such a monster as that! I was sure I could do it easily."

"Next time you'll know better. I was a fool to let you try it," said Crayven grimly. He took her drinking-cup and brought some water from the stream. Teresa drank and smiled at him pensively.

"Were we really in danger?" she asked.

"Oh, we might have got a very nasty fall—and there wouldn't have been any first aid to the injured."

"Well, why *did* you let me do it, then? You said it was dangerous."

"That's right—blame me. I told you I was a fool. Always have been—epecially where women are concerned—and they know it."

"Well," said Teresa, confidentially, "I have never known a nice man who wasn't."

"Thank you for the adjective. When you've rested a bit we'd better go down to the chalet and get some warm milk. I thought you were going to faint when I'd got you down."

"Nonsense, that would have been too tactless. I feel perfectly all right, except that my shoulder is strained and I'm covered with bruises and my hands are cut. I shouldn't mind if only I'd got to the top. I hate having to pay for something I haven't got."

"Then you shouldn't want something you

can't get," said Crayven, sombrely. "I am an excellent person to preach on that text."

As she did not move he sat down again beside her.

"I do not believe," said Teresa, "that you are as badly off as you make out. If you were you wouldn't admit it. The real bankrupts never do."

"You don't believe I care for you, then?"

"As the pale shadow of Rosamond, perhaps!"

She was punished for her coquetry—for Crayven's rough and passoniate kiss woke nothing but repulsion in her. She sprang away from him and stood trembling with a desire to weep. She had turned quite white. After a moment she began to walk away from him down the slope.

"Not that way," he said coldly. "The path is here."

He went on ahead and she turned and followed him. Presently he stopped and waited, with his back to her and his head bent, looking at the ground, till she came near. Then he faced her.

"You should not play with me," he said hoarsely.

"No, I should not," she said.

She passed him and went on down to the chalet where shiftless human beings, cattle, pigs, and chickens huddled together on the very edge of the majestic cliffs. There Teresa drank her warm milk, sitting on a bench in the sun, while

Crayven walked back and forth behind her, nervously smoking one cigarette after another. Teresa felt suddenly very tired, and her strained shoulder ached furiously. There was a long walk still before them. But she had quite got back her composure, and when she had finished the milk she was ready to start at once.

"Won't you rest half an hour? You must be tired," said Crayven, with pleading eyes.

"No, I'd rather go on." she answered indifferently.

They went silently along the winding path down the hot, stony hillside where grey herbs sent out a sharp fragrance, and into the depths of the pine-forest, dusky, cool, and sweet. Teresa, still pale and looking melancholy, walked ahead in the narrow path, but when it widened Crayven walked beside her. At last he said:

"Don't be too angry with me. . . . Did you hate so to have me touch you?"

"I'm not angry. . . . I don't know—don't talk about it," she said impatiently.

He uttered not a word after that. About them the sleepy, alluring silence of the forest stretched out, glade after glade, mossy, fresh, untrodden, with a light dreamy motion in its high crests, with a soft murmur in its distances.

IX

THAT evening Teresa sat watching the bridge-table in Nina's drawing-room. Ernesto had come back from his week in the motor, bland and content with himself, and full of stories and silences about Adela Crayven. At present he and Crayven were playing against the bellicose Vicomte, whose duel somehow had not come off, and his sister, and Ernesto, as always, was excitedly absorbed in the game.

"*Contre!*" he cried, when "no trumps" had been declared against him, slapping his cards down on the table and folding his arms frenziedly. He played out the hand fiercely, pounding each trick with his fist as he took it in and turned it; lost the odd; and leaned across the table, demanding of his partner with concentrated fury:

"For God's sake, why didn't you lead me a heart!"

"Heart? Heart?" said Crayven vaguely. "I don't think I had one."

"You had! Haven't you just played the king on my ace? You've lost us the game!"

"Very sorry, indeed," murmured Crayven.

"Sorry!" snorted Ernesto, dealing round a fresh pack with desperation.

Nina, crocheting on an endless piece of white wool, glanced at him with alarmed sympathy, and Teresa smiled faintly. Ernesto was never ill-tempered except at cards, but his card-manners were atrocious. Teresa always remembered, when she saw him at play, the phrase of a clever Italian, "*Siamo civili mas non civili.*" No, decidedly, Ernesto was not civilised. The passion to win swept away all his surface civility.

Crayven was undeniably an irritating partner. To-night he was playing his worst; it was clear that his mind was anywhere but on the game. Teresa, from where she sat, a little behind him, glanced now and then at his grave profile, the weary droop of his eyelids. Midway in the last game of the rubber she got up and said good-night to Nina. Ernesto, studying his cards with knitted brows, did not notice her move till the other two men at the table rose; then he protested:

"Oh, don't go now! Wait a few minutes and cut in, Teresa, we're almost done—you take Crayven's place, or mine."

"No, I'm tired—I don't want to play," she said, with a perverse pleasure in Crayven's look of suppressed anger. She knew he had come only in order to walk home with her, but she had not meant that he should; and now she went away, firmly refusing any escort. It was only a few steps to the hotel. But, in the one lighted street

of the little town, she turned the other way and walked slowly, past the lights of the village, out on the quiet road that led down to a bridge over the brawling Vieze. The night was cool, and a current of colder air, swept down by the stream, made her shiver slightly as she wrapped her cloak about her and leaned to look down at the foaming water. She was extremely tired, but nervous restlessness and melancholy dominated her physical fatigue. That was the impression the day had left with her—a mordant melancholy —and she had seen the same thing in Crayven's face that evening. What had happened, after all, and why was it that suddenly all had fallen to ruins in their relation to one another? Why was it that at a touch that world of which he was the centre, and which had for a moment beckoned to her, had crumbled away, vanished like a mirage? It was gone, and she felt desolately *ennuyée.*

Hard reality stared her in the face—the sense of her bondage. She was not free for a moment, she could never love Crayven nor anyone else. Something far deeper than convention, which she would willingly have thrown overboard, bound her, body and soul. She liked Crayven thoroughly, she felt affection for him, and in her rebellion she wished passionately that she could care more for him or could be deceived into thinking she cared—but she could not. All

that pleasant, shimmering illusion of possibility was gone. He was more sympathetic to her in many ways than Basil, she even liked him better, but she had no real emotion for him. Basil had taken it all—all! He had taken her whole self, her will, her imagination, her entire power of loving. She was drained of it all. There was nothing left. She was bound—bound! And she wept with anger as she realised how completely she was delivered into his hands, how vain had been her pretense that she could do without him, could "console" herself. He might be unfaithful, but she never could. How strange was that bond, deeper than the will, deeper than any sympathy of mind, taking no account of the many things in him that she deeply disliked, of the fact that she really disliked his character! It was infinitely more than a physical bond, it was a passion of the soul. How strange and how terrible!

She looked up at the mountain-chain, black as midnight, cutting with its jagged edge the starry sky; and all its mass suddenly seemed to her an illusion, something immaterial that might dissolve away at a breath. Why was she here in the midst of this unreality, this play-scene set for a drama which did not begin? She felt as though she were in a dream—one of those fatiguing nightmares where endless time passes in preparation for something that never happens.

Longing caught at her heart—desire for the one reality, even though a wounding one, in this world of shadow.

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When she met Crayven next day she was sweetly gentle to him. She seemed to want to show her liking for him, to forget the untoward incident at Anthemoz; and Crayven, at first a little bewildered by her kindness, ended by accepting it sadly. They went out as usual after tea into the forest. Teresa had never seen Crayven so intensely melancholy, so almost childish in his depression. He was unreasonable and petulant as a child whom one tries to console for the deprivation of sweets to-day by the promise of a walk to-morrow. All his strength and grip of himself were in abeyance. He complained, and Teresa tried to coax him. She offered to write to him when he went away, which must be, she knew, within a few days.

"Oh, letters," he said ungraciously. "What are they, when I can't see you?"

"Oh, you *will* like them," she said. "Surely you don't want me to disappear altogether."

"You *will* disappear. What does a mere friendly liking count, after all? You'll forget all about me in three months. I shall be only an incident. I wish it had never happened. I wish I'd never seen you. I've been shaken up and bothered for nothing—just as I was settling com-

fortably into middle-age, and not caring whether anyone cared much for me or not!—Oh, well, no fool like a middle-aged fool. I hope I shall get knocked on the head in this row, if there's going to be one—that'll make it all right."

"Don't be Byronic. I never thought you were sentimental."

"Yes, but I am. I want to be. Bear with me for a little. . . . I want a photograph of you. Have you got one?"

"Not here, but I'll send you one."

This time Teresa was careful not to say anything about Rosamond. The hour for coquetry was decidedly past, and the freedom of their earlier talks. She was oppressed by Crayven's seriousness, and a little frightened by it.

"That's all I shall have of you," he said moodily. "A photograph—that won't give me anything real of you—not your beautiful colour, nor all that changing expression of your face. But don't forget that I have cared a lot about you—don't forget. I'm a constant brute, a faithful one. If you ever needed me—but that's absurd."

He flung away a half-smoked cigarette, and began tearing up the moss near him with nervous fingers.

"You believe that, don't you?" he went on hurriedly. "You believe there's been something real in this—that it's been real to me?"

"It's hard to believe—it's so unreasonable," she said.

"That's just what reality is—unreason. Who can reason about a thing of this sort? It comes —nobody knows why."

"I've been so little to you, after all—not so much as I might have been, even."

"You've been yourself. There's always one person that cares and one that submits to being cared for. . . . I wish I could take care of you——"

It seemed foolish to mind his taking her hand quietly and holding it; but when she withdrew it abruptly, he looked rather pleased than otherwise.

"Want to soothe my wounded self-esteem? I wish I didn't see through it! You know that one doesn't like to be considered perfectly harmless —what a lot you do know!"

Teresa smiled vaguely, looking into the shadows of the forest.

"Don't you want to walk on?" she asked.

"No, it's better here. Stay a little longer."

He lit another cigarette and smoked silently, looking at her now and then with a long, reflective gaze. Teresa was silent, too, conscious that it would be better to talk, but unable to find the right words. And the living, breathing silence of the forest, enveloping them softly, with golden lights, with mysterious shadows, made itself felt,

a lulling, sensuous power, a mighty influence, a will. It dissolved all things into dream. One seemed to feel the world swinging through space, wild, primeval, obedient only to a single law which crushed the individual will to dust. Danger! Danger to one's small individuality, to one's little world, opposing this vast, impersonal, indifferent force!

The blood came to Teresa's face. At the touch of Crayven's lips on her hand she did not move, but the sound of his voice—he murmured her name—sent her to her feet with a leap.

"Come away from here!" she cried, pale and laughing a little. "This place is bewitched! Come at once, or you will turn into something queer! I felt myself turning into a tree as I sat there—a birch-tree, all white and silver—and taking root by that rock!"

"Ah, why couldn't you let the dream come true," he said, his black eyes glowing.

"No, no—no dreams! I'm afraid of them. One does such odd things in dreams—and if they should come true! And this place! . . . Why, here one could murder one's grandmother, or do anything odd, and it would seem perfectly natural—only I daresay the Swiss police would find it out!"

She laughed again restlessly, and her eyes, blue as the sky, glanced about the place. Crayven got up and came close to her.

"Well—before we go—since it *is* an enchanted wood, kiss me once, will you?" His voice trembled, and he caught his breath suddenly. "I'm—Teresa, I'm going to-morrow."

"To-morrow? . . . No, you can't be! You don't mean it. . . ."

"Ah, but I do. I got a despatch this morning. I *must* go. So. . . ."

He waited, looking at her with eyes that seemed suddenly tired, seared.

"So, kiss me good-bye, dear," he said.

"To-morrow?" said Teresa confusedly, "Why didn't you tell me? Don't go. . . ."

He was silent, waiting—his face set and sad. She leaned toward him, flushing suddenly, her eyes veiling themselves. Crayven took her face in his two hands, and his gaze lingered on its every line and contour, its trembling colour, the tremor of the eyelashes and lips. Then he clasped her close and kissed her—a long kiss.

For him it was the end. There was a deep tenderness, a protecting gentleness, in his relinquishment, as he set her free.

X

ONLY an incident!" He had said that that was all he should be, in her memory, and that she would forget him in three months.

She knew that she should never forget him. That last scene in the forest had made it impossible.

It was not for himself alone, nor even the fact of his emotion for her. That had left with her a tenderness for him—but a faint, a gentle tenderness. It was the least emotional recognition she could give of what nevertheless had touched her heart—that he should really, genuinely, care anything for her, after all her frank egotism toward him, her absorption in herself, her crudeness. . . . That speech, for example, up at Anthemoz, about using her relation with him as a spur to Basil! In spite of all that, and of the fact that she could give him nothing really, he had liked her. She was grateful. And she was dimly, passionately grateful for his bearing toward her at that last moment. . . .

There was the reason why she should never forget him. He had understood. There, at the end, he had protected her.

And it was like a flash of light over a new

scene—her knowledge that she had needed protection. It was a blinding illumination. She could not take in at once all it meant—it came slowly, as she lay sleepless at night, or lost herself in reverie, in the days after Crayven's going.

One thing appeared clearly at once. She cabled to Basil: "Shall I come home?" And she began packing before the answer came: "Rather!" She laughed as she read it. "What a boy he is, after all!" she said aloud.

A week later she and Ronald were on the water.

She followed Crayven's journey mentally, step by step—the steamer to Port Said, the plunge into the desert. As she lay at night on deck, motionless for hours under her rugs, and watched the rush of the dark water into darkness, she thought of his long ride through the sands. She seemed to see him wrapped in the Arab cloak, his face rather tired but philosophically calm, as when she had seen it first. He was going back to his work—to danger, perhaps. The incident, for him, was over.

It was probable that she would never see him again. She breathed out an intense wish for his safety and well-being, into the vague night.



PART IV

I

BASIL was there on the pier, when, crippled by a mid-Atlantic storm, the ship crept in, a day late. A haze of summer heat hung over the bay and the city; a hot breath came from the land. In the crowd she caught sight of him, a head above his neighbours, his eyes eagerly lifted, searching the crowded deck. He saw her, and waved his straw hat. It was a smart Panama, and his light-grey coat looked new. But Basil was always smart. When they met, with a quick clasp of both hands, in the midst of the crowd, Teresa's glance devoured his face, noting its slight pallor, slight sallowness about the eyes.

"You're well?" she said breathlessly.

"Oh, all right. But it's beastly hot! Must get you and the boy straight out of town——"

Smiling, he caught Ronald up and kissed him, laughing with pleasure.

"How you've grown, old man! Forgotten me? Do you know who I am?"

"Papa," said Ronald, with his superior smile.

"Good for you—what a memory you've got! . . ."

He put Teresa, Ronald, and the nurse into a carriage and sent them to a hotel, staying himself to see the luggage through the Custom-house. It

was nearly seven o'clock, and Ronald had been put to bed, when Basil came. Teresa was lying on her bed, her head still whirling from the effect of the voyage. Basil wanted first to see Ronald again. The child was in the next room, not yet asleep. He went in, and Teresa heard his voice—pleasant-toned, fond, and joking—and heard Ronald laugh sleepily. At last Basil came back, shutting the door, and sat down beside Teresa.

"What a splendid fellow he is—what a beauty!" he said, with a little shake in his voice. "I'm fond of that boy, Teresa."

"Turn on the light—I want to see you," said Teresa lazily.

Basil turned on the light and took off his coat, showing a pale-blue silk shirt which fastened neatly about his strong throat with a blue tie and a gold pin; then he sat down again on the edge of the bed. Teresa lay looking at him. Her loose dark hair swept across her forehead and cheek, and her lowered eyelids showed a narrow line of blue.

"How hot you look, poor dear," she said softly, looking at his forehead.

"Yes—beastly weather. Must have a bath before dinner. Are you too tired to go out somewhere? I'll find a cool place to eat."

"Tired—no. Only my head's queer yet. We had a rough voyage."

"I know—odd at this time of year."

She touched his sleeve caressingly.

"What a nice rig! Blue's your colour—mine too, oddly. Red suits Ronald best. He's looking well, isn't he?"

"Like a fighting-cock! You've taken good care of him. And you . . . you're looking very much stronger . . ."

"You haven't said you're glad to see us back."

"And you . . . are *you* glad . . . ?"

"If I'm glad!"

Basil bent to look into her eyes, gathered her up in her loose white dress, and her arms went round him in a clasp that seemed as if it could never loosen. They held one another, silent, for long, long moments, and to Teresa all bitterness, all chance of misunderstanding, seemed to ebb away out of consciousness. Just to have him there, in her arms, was like bread to a gnawing hunger, like water to a biting thirst.

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They dined together at one of their old haunts, on a balcony overlooking a broad street. It was not a fashionable quarter. The restaurant and the street were full of foreign *bourgeois* people, less noisy because of the heat. Low thunder-clouds hung over the city; it seemed to gasp for breath. Teresa wore the white dress and hat which she had put into her steamer-trunk with

an idea of this occasion. Basil studied her face with keen attention.

"You look younger—you look awfully strong and well—it *has* done you a lot of good. It's too bad to pull you back into this heat—we must get out of town to-morrow. You haven't told me what made you decide so suddenly to come back," he said abruptly.

"Because I wanted to—I was bored there. Are you put out with me for coming so soon?"

"Am I? Did I want you to go? Did I, Teresa?"

"No. But you might have got used to my being away. You look at me as though I'd been gone a year."

"And it seems to me you have. You seem strange to me, Teresa."

"That's it! That's the very way you look at me—as though I were a stranger! You'd forgotten me."

"Forgotten you!"

"Yes, you were forgetting me—if I'd stayed a few months longer, you'd have forgotten how I look! It's true—you said so yourself."

"I didn't. I said you seem strange, and you do. It's as though you were a person that I must begin to know all over again. Don't you like that? Would you rather have me feel that I know you like a book, like an old hat? Drink some of that white wine."

"You were forgetting me," murmured Teresa, as she took up her glass. "Confess that you're surprised to find how nice I really am. Had you forgotten that I'm pretty? Could you tell the colour of my eyes? You've got no memory, Basil, and therefore no soul. All you have is a habit." She smiled at him. "You've a habit of me, or a habit of getting on without me. Oh, *I* see that you could get on without me, and I shall never give you the chance again!"

"Will you swear to that?"

"By sun and moon I swear!"

"Well, I'm content then. I get on damn badly without you, that's the truth."

"But you get on. And I can't get on at all without you—not at all. I've found that out."

"Then I'm glad you went away, if that's true."

"Yes, only I knew it before."

They looked at one another, and drank a silent toast. To Teresa the world about her—the stifling night, the breathless air, the crowd of ordinary people—had taken on the colour and glow of the wine, a mysterious radiance. She was eating very little, but the food seemed good. The waiter in his musty black coat, with a tired napkin over his arm, seemed a pathetic and amiable human creature. She glanced at his grave face, as he awaited the order for the *entrée,* with sympathy. How dreary he must be of people choosing their *entrée!* But no—he was pleased to suggest

that one of those queerly-named dishes was better than the other—he looked interested. How amiable!

She smiled joyously at Basil. "And now tell me what you've been doing with your unchartered freedom—confess how you've enjoyed being a bachelor!"

"You can't be a bachelor when you've been married," said Basil with conviction. "It's living at *table d'hôtes* when you've had your own house—it ain't the cheese. I hate bumming round."

And he looked at her with deep content in his eyes.

"We'll get a little place in the country somewhere for the autumn, and I shall sit down and do some work. I haven't done anything decent since you went away."

"What *have* you done, then, you fraud?"

"Oh, I wrote you—those beastly illustrations—and another thing or two. But it's been hot, and every day or so I had to pick up and go out of town. I couldn't settle down to anything. I want my own place—and you in it."

"But, dear boy, you don't like my housekeeping!"

"Bother housekeeping! You do it as well as you can, that's all. I don't care much what I eat."

"Poor, dear Basil! But I *will* do it better this

time—I really will. I want a settled place too, a place where we belong. I'm so tired, as you say, of bumming. I thought when I came home this time that I never wanted to see Europe again. It's the fourteenth time I've crossed that stupid ocean—and oh, I thought of all the years of wandering when I was a child, and how we never had a home. And I'm sick of it. And you and I, Basil, have never had a place of our own. We've lived like two sparrows, building our nest under somebody else's eaves. And I want my own eaves! I want a house somewhere, I don't care if it's in a beastly suburb, or where—and a garden, and about ten acres of trees. and an asparagus-bed, and a cow!"

Basil laughed.

"We'll have it, then—by Jove, that would suit me! But where shall we get the money?"

"Why, we have thirty-five hundred a year, haven't we? We could pay for it in three or four years."

"Yes, but what should we live on, then?"

Teresa looked slightly dashed.

"Oh, we'll make enough to live on," she said, recovering herself. "I can make a good deal if I try—and I won't have any new clothes, and I'll buy all our food at the cheapest shops. I'm sure we can do it."

"Very well, we'll do it. I'll do anything you really want, Teresa."

"Will you?" she murmured.

She drank her wine absently and set the glass down, and looked at him with a strange, passionate expression of doubt.

"Who knows?"

"What do you mean?" asked Basil.

"Who knows what you would do for me? Who knows what I am to you?"

"*I* know, pretty well, I should think. Try me. I don't think there's much I wouldn't do for you."

"Would you——"

She stopped suddenly, made an impatient gesture, and said, "No—that's nothing. I won't say that."

"Won't say what? What is it? Say what you had in your mind."

She refused, but Basil pressed her eagerly. For some ten minutes she resisted, but at last she said:

"Oh, I'll tell you, then. All that came into my mind—that thing about—Mrs. Perry." The name cost her a slight effort. "And I started to ask if you would tell me now all about it. But I don't really care—that's why I stopped. It would make it seem too important to me. I don't care what happened—only tell me this, you didn't care about her?"

"I *have* told you—not an atom."

"Then she was a fool."

"I suppose she was."

"Oh, well, that's all—keep the rest to yourself. As I should do, in a similar case."

"As you would? How do you mean, Teresa—in my place, you mean?"

"No, I mean in *my* place."

With her elbows leaning on the table and her chin in her palms, she smiled at him slightly. Basil studied her delicate, subtle face. It struck him suddenly that there was a new force about it. It might only the poise of recovered health and energy—but it seemed more. She looked somehow surer, more experienced, with more reserve. There was a suggestion of malice in her look. He considered her profoundly.

"I don't know what you mean, you little devil," he said caressingly, "but I know you're more charming than ever. It's about time you came back."

"Yes, said Teresa softly. "It was time—if I meant to come back. And, on the whole, I did."

"What do you mean? There's something in your mind—there's something you haven't told me."

"Is there? Is it possible?"

"Now come, Teresa! Don't grill a fellow, and on a night like this—and the first minute you get back, too! You don't hate me, do you? I'm so confoundedly happy to get you back—I've never been so happy in my life."

Basil's voice quavered, and he seized her hand across the table.

Teresa looked at him strangely, and was silent. She smiled as he filled her glass again with the topaz-coloured wine, and gazed out dreamily over the street. The black night, mysterious and ominous, with the roll of thunder coming nearer, seemed now to have left only a core of radiance about them. The low clouds, the flaring lightning, all threats, all uncertainties, pressed in upon the sensuous dream, and seemed to concentrate it into an infinite moment, inexpressibly sweet.

II

THEY found a house on Long Island, and Teresa took a perverse pleasure in the fact that it was within an easy distance of Mrs. Perry's big country-place. Basil had objected to this neighbourhood, but had been overruled. The house was exactly what they wanted—an old farmstead, which had been made habitable by a painter of their acquaintance. It had a big studio, a straggling old-fashion garden, and an orchard where Ronald could play. There were glimpses of the sea. They put in some of their furniture, which had been stored, and Teresa announced that they were settled till December, by which time they might perhaps have found their permanent home. This, she said, must be in some place not infested by the rich; where, therefore, land needn't be bought by the square inch.

Meantime she devoted herself with great energy to the task of making their temporary abode comfortable. She became an active housewife, and sang gaily as she went about with her sleeves rolled up, ordering the place. Basil had settled himself promptly into the studio, where he welcomed interruption. He announced that he was hard at work, but when Teresa passed the door or Ronald looked in at the window, he seized

upon their society, and would come out to lounge about the house or the garden, smoking and cheerfully inspecting their activities. His tuneless whistle was frequently heard. He was very happy. Teresa too had recovered her old gaiety. The clouds of the past year seemed all to have disappeared.

Basil left all practical arrangements completely in Teresa's hands. She was to choose their home, and everything was to be exactly as she wished. He applauded the meals that she caused to be set before him, made light of any drawbacks, and proclaimed that he had never in his life been so comfortable. He was disinclined to stir from their domestic precincts even for half a day, and neither of them wanted to see any people. He took Ronald down to the beach every day, and taught him to swim. He wanted Teresa always within sight or hearing. He wanted, he said, to wallow in unbridled domesticity.

One morning Teresa, idly looking over the newspaper as she sat in a hammock, with Ronald, scantily clad, making mud-pies near by, saw on the first page an article, under portentous headlines, on the threatened war between England and Turkey. Turkey had marched troops into the Sinai Peninsula, on the pretext that it was not a part of Egpyt. England had let it be understood that if the Turkish forces were not withdrawn she would bombard Constantinople. This

was the gist of the despatches, eked out by comment and prophecy from various sources to make a startling column and a half.

Teresa read the article several times. It had come, then, the "trouble" that Crayven had foreseen, and that had called him back to his post. And what had come to him there, in his old fort in the desert, with his handful of soldiers? An emergency like this, she knew, had been always before him. Half civilian, half soldier, he was one of those many Englishmen on the outposts of the Empire, living and working obscurely, perhaps fighting and dying obscurely—it was all, as he had said, in the day's work.

She dropped the newspaper and lay back, thinking of him.

She was sure that he would meet his emergency well, with the quiet courage that gives a touch of the heroic to even the simplest human figure. He was steady of nerve and strong of will. He would be calm under fire, he would make the most of his resources. He would assuredly not give way. If there were any dispute about that old powder-magazine and that well—the only water to be had within three days' journey—she could quite see him declining to give it up to a Turkish army camped about him. He was the sort of man who would shut his eyes naturally to the odds against him—and even, out of pure obstinacy perhaps, put a match to the powder-magazine.

Ronald came up to her, to exhibit a particularly fine pie, and she said to him:

"Do you remember the man—that gave you your stick, you know?"

"Yes," said Ronald thoughtfully. "Is he here?"

"No—he's far away, across the big ocean and the desert. And he's in a fort, with cannon, and there are a lot of soldiers who want to shoot him and take the fort."

Ronald brought his two bare heels together and his hand to his forehead, in the military salute that Crayven had taught him.

"Salute, sir!" he said. "If he has cannons, why doesn't he shoot the soldiers?"

"Perhaps he will, but there are such a lot of them."

Ronald looked very solemn, and dug his thumb into the mud-pie, destroying its symmetry.

"How many are there?" he asked after a pause.

"Oh, I don't know—thousands, perhaps—heaps of them."

"Will he fight with a sword, like granpa, or will he shoot their heads off with the cannons?"

"I don't know, dearest. Go and make another pie, will you? That one's quite spoilt."

"No, make me a fort, with cannons."

"No, I can't now, dearest, I'm going to write a letter."

She went into the house, meaning to write to Crayven. But Basil called her into the studio to show her a drawing he had just finished, and presently it was lunch-time. The letter was not written that day, nor the next. After all, why write to him? He had said that he didn't want letters.

But within the week there came a letter to her from Crayven. It had been sent to Switzerland, and forwarded by Nina. As it happened, Teresa was out when the rural postman brought that day's mail; and Basil, according to his frank custom, opened and read the letter. When Teresa came back from her walk with Ronald, Basil gave it to her, with a number of others, without comment. She sat down on the step and began to look them over. Basil, smoking rather nervously, was walking up and down the verandah. When she came to Crayven's letter and looked at the signature, she changed colour slightly and glanced up at Basil. He met her glance sombrely. She read the letter, which had been written a day or so after Crayven's arrival at his post, and which was rather too expressive. Then she folded it up carefully and glanced up again at Basil.

"I wish you would not open my letters," she said calmly.

"I daresay. I won't in future. I didn't know it was a love-letter. Perhaps you'll tell me, if you don't mind, who the devil is 'Athelstan'?"

"Oh, a man you know—Crayven, that Englishman, you remember."

"And how does he happen to write to you like that? Where have you seen him?"

"He was in the Val d'Iliez this summer."

"You never mentioned him to me."

"No."

"Why didn't you?"

"I didn't choose to."

"Do you mean to tell me about this now?"

Teresa was silent, looking away through the slanting shadows of the orchard. Basil was looking at her, quite pale. She shook her head finally.

"Not on demand. You've no right to demand it. I shall tell you if I choose, when I choose."

"Very well, Teresa. I don't know what you've done, I don't know whether you know what you're doing now—I don't understand the thing. Do as you like, of course, about telling me."

He went into the house, and Teresa sat still, in one position, till tea was brought out, when she got up, her whole body aching from constraint. Basil sent out word that he didn't want any tea and that he was going to town for dinner. Ronald ran up for his bit of cake; and when Basil, with a curt "Good-bye," departed, trotted down to the gate with him. Basil called over his shoulder:

"I may not be back to-night."

Teresa made no answer, but smiled faintly and scornfully.

It took no more than this, then, to break up the peace of their reunion! How absurd, to quarrel about Crayven! She was angry at Basil's ready distrust of her. The letter *was* over-expressive, but——

She read it again. Yes, it was a love-letter, but a melancholy one. It was by no means the letter of a happy or triumphant lover. It was not very long: and at the end Crayven said that his district had already been invaded, and that a force of three thousand Turks were camped at two days' journey from him.

"I may not write again," he ended. "But if I get out of this I will, just to let you know. Of course it's a chance whether this letter gets through—but if it does you'll know why I wrote it. I can't help it—I can't go out without a word to you. I was a fool to say I didn't want letters —I do want them. But don't bother about me. Write if you like. But if anything happens to me —there's only one chance out of many that it will—don't let it trouble you. It doesn't matter very much to me, you know."

She sat down and wrote to him, and then walked to the post-office to mail her letter, taking Ronald with her. A way of getting news of him had occurred to her. She sent a cablegram to a friend of hers in London, asking him to find out

for her Crayven's situation. She also bought an evening paper, but there was nothing in that except scarehead prophecies of the despatch of an English fleet to Constantinople. She threw the paper away and went slowly home along the quiet country road. A fresh wind was blowing from the sea. The September heats were coming to an end. The first hint of autumn was in the air.

So far, since she had read Crayven's letter, she had been thinking only of him. It was not at all like him, she thought, to alarm her for nothing. He must have believed himself in danger, and, as he was not a timorous nor an hysterical person, the danger must be real. She was touched that he should have thought of her and have wished to send her that message, which might be the last. After all, it had been a genuine feeling that he had had for her; she had been sure of it ever since that last day in the Swiss forest. And she felt affection for him, and a longing to know that he was safe.

She regretted nothing about the affair; not even the fact that his letter had made trouble for her with Basil. She did not regret her silence to Basil, nor that he now knew that she had concealed something from him. Of course he would be angry. He had believed always that she had no secrets from him; and in fact, till this, she had had none. It was Basil's doing, that she had kept this from him. If he had his secrets, she

also had a right to hers. She had not deliberately resolved to practise any deception upon him; she had not deliberately engaged in a relation which she knew he would resent. She had been led into it instinctively by her feeling of partial estrangement from him, and for this he was responsible. He had made her feel that, after all, she was separate from him; he was one person and she was another. They loved one another, but each, after all, had a life outside that love. Basil had not sacrificed to her his caprice for Mrs. Perry, nor his loyalty to the consequences of that caprice. He had no right then to demand an account from her. He had taken the wrong tone. He had gone off in a rage. No doubt he could not help that—he had been taken by surprise and deeply disturbed. He would come back, perhaps, more reasonable—and then she might, or might not, explain. Meantime, she was not sorry that he was disturbed. It would not hurt Basil to suffer a little. He had made her suffer. And with her return she had forgiven him, she had given herself to him again completely, without the shadow of a reproach; less joyously than before, but more seriously, more passionately. She had loved him more because she had—from his point of view—offended against him, and because the account was balanced. She did not feel in the least sinful because of this, but she knew that he would think her so. This consciousness gave her

an additional tenderness for him, and it freed her absolutely from her resentment of the affair with Isabel. It had enabled her to forgive Basil, and to put the thing entirely out of her mind.

Well, and now? She did not quite know what would happen now, but for the moment she was indifferent. Basil must come back sometime, and then they would see.

She dined alone; and afterward walked by the light of a half moon down to the sea. This was the side of the island which faced the open ocean, and great breakers rolled in to fling themselves on the shore. The wind was still rising. It blew her hair about as she sat on the sand, and whipped it into strings over her forehead, and left on her lips the salt taste of the sea. She sat there till the moon was near setting, feeling with deep pleasure the tumult of the night, and, with something that was not pain, the tumult, the exciting uncertainty of life.

III

BASIL returned by the last train that night. Next morning he breakfasted in his room, and Teresa did not see him till near noon, when she went into the studio to get a half-finished clay model. They usually worked side by side some hours of the morning, but now Teresa gathered up her materials, with a cool "Good-morning," and went out again. Basil did not answer, but looked up from his drawing-board with a haggard, sombre glance. She noticed that the sheet of paper before him was entirely blank.

Luncheon came and went in perfect silence, except for Teresa's conversation with Ronald, who had lately been promoted to take his dinner at the family board. After luncheon Teresa put Ronald to bed, and went into the studio. There was the blank sheet of paper, over which Basil had spent the morning. From the window she could see him walking up and down in the garden, and she saw the well-known nervous motion of his hands as he threw away a half-smoked cigarette, lit another, and presently threw that away too. The day was cool and clouding over. She lit the fire ready-laid in the big grate, and moved about the room, putting it in order, and clearing away the litter of pipes and cigarette-

ends and burnt matches which Basil had left. Then she looked out at him again, irresolute. Basil was capable, she knew, of sulking for a week straight on. It was not now as it had been in the first years of their marriage, when any constraint between them was more pain to him than to herself, when he was always the first to insist on an understanding. But—this was not an ordinary case of sulking. At luncheon he had eaten almost nothing and his eyes looked as though he had not slept. He was suffering.

After a little, she put a white scarf over her head and shoulders and went out to him. He looked at her with that same sombre expression, and when she slipped her hand through his arm he drew away.

"Basil, aren't you making too much of this?" she asked, walking on beside him.

"No," he said curtly.

"It seems to me you are putting on tragedy-airs without much reason."

"Does it?"

"You are trying to bully me."

He made an impatient gesture.

"I'm not. You can do as you damn please. Apparently you have done so. Only if you think it's going to make no difference——"

"What difference?"

"Just this—that we won't live together any more."

"Basil! . . ."

"Yes, I mean it. I shall go away."

"How absurd you are!"

"Perhaps so—but if you think I could endure to live like this—— You simply don't realise what you've done. You seem to think it's nothing!"

"I'm not aware that I've done anything so frightfully serious."

"No? Well, you've shaken my whole idea of you, my belief in you—that's all. It never occurred to me not to trust you. It never occurred to me—— But now—I wonder if you've lied to me all along."

"I've never lied to you—never."

"How can I know? How do I know what you are? I don't know you at all. I call that lying—to come back to me with a secret like that. I should never have known, except by accident, that you had had a lover."

"A lover? No."

"Yes! A man doesn't write that sort of letter unless—— And a man that you barely knew—a stranger—My God, Teresa, what has come to you?"

He stopped short, clenching his fists, deathly pale, the muscles about his mouth twitching violently.

"And you refuse to tell me——"

"I haven't refused. I said you had no right to

demand that I should tell you. You have your secrets—why shouldn't I have mine?"

"How you talk!" he burst out. "Like the silliest, shallowest sort of a new woman! 'Rights'! It isn't a question of rights—it's a question of necessity. Some things can be and others can't. Secrets! I've never had a secret from you that counted for anything. And you can't have this sort of a secret from me. You *can't,* if we're to go on at all. Understand?"

"Don't bully, Basil."

"Bully! . . . By the Lord, you *shall* tell me!"

He turned like a flash and his two hands, trembling, closed tight round her throat.

"Basil . . ." she murmured, looking at him with half-shut eyes, almost smiling.

With as abrupt a movement he released her, flung himself down on the bench under the apple-tree and hid his face on his arms. Teresa stood still and looked at him.

"Basil . . . I can't understand why you behave in this way. You *don't* trust me, then, at all, really? There was nothing in that letter to cause all this."

He was silent.

"I've never loved anyone but you."

"All the worse!" He lifted his head and looked at her. "What was it, then, that made you do this? Vanity? I could forgive you if you loved someone else, but this . . . !"

"Vanity? Perhaps, and perhaps you had something to do with it, Basil."

"I had? What do you mean?"

"You know well enough. You know what happened before I went away. You know how I felt about it—or perhaps you don't know."

"What idiocy!" said Basil savagely. "Do you mean to say that because of *that* . . . I don't believe you."

"I'm lying, then?"

"I don't believe that made any real difference to you. How could it? You know well enough it didn't, to me."

"And this doesn't, to me."

"But it does to me! It makes all the difference to *me!* Don't tell me you don't care for that man —I know you do."

"Yes, in a way—I am—fond of him. It's true."

"Yes, it's true. And you've written to him."

"Yes. And I've sent a cable to London to find out whether he's dead or alive."

"Yes!"

Basil got up and walked a few steps down the path, and stood still. Teresa wrapped her scarf more closely about her and shivered slightly. A cold wind swept through the orchard; dry leaves came fluttering down from the apple-trees.

"We can't go on," said Basil, hollowly.

"What did you say?" she asked, moving toward him.

"I don't know . . . but I don't think we can go on. I can't stand this . . . I shall go away."

"Go away—where?"

"Anywhere. I shall go away from you."

"You mean you'll leave us—Ronald and me?"

"Ronald . . . yes."

"As you please, Basil."

She turned and went back to the house by another path. There she took her work and shut herself up in her own room. It was cold; the fire was not lit. She shivered, walking up and down the room, but it did not occur to her to light the fire. Her discomfort seemed part of a general past that had enveloped the world. And yet there was a core of warmth somewhere, a thought that caused her a certain exultation. It was absurd of Basil to take this thing so seriously, but she was glad he was absurd in that way—she was thoroughly glad that he cared so much! Only, if he did take it seriously, who knew? She had no intention of being humble about what she had done. Perhaps it had been foolish, but had Basil alone the right to be foolish? Where was his right to sit in judgment upon her? How angry he had been at that word —"right"! Possibly it was a foolish word—they could not theorise about this situation. It was a

question of necessity, Basil had said—in other words, of his demand. And he had enforced that demand by a threat . . . Yes, he might go away—and she could not let him go. Necessity . . .

She sat down and took up her damp clay, but her fingers were stiff with cold. She shivered, and all of a sudden tears came to her eyes. Why had she hurt Basil so? How had she been able to look at him, to see that he was suffering, and almost rejoice in it? What had come to her? "My God, what has come to you, Teresa?" he had cried. Yes, what? An instinct of cruelty, for one thing. Never before had she deliberately made any person suffer, as she had been conscious of doing just now. A feeling of recklessness, carelessness of herself . . . Crayven . . . that day in the forest . . .

She did not regret it. If Basil suffered for it, she must suffer for it, that was all. Of course she would not let him go. What he demanded she must yield. There was something behind his demand, something more than his own egotism. Necessity . . .

IV

THE question of his right to know was then waived. That night she told him what there was to tell, with complete frankness. He would leave no detail to the imagination. He wanted to know all, all.

It seemed to Teresa that there was not very much to tell. It seemed to her that Basil's infinite questions wanted to wring more out of the facts than they contained, almost. It seemed to her that some part of his intelligence was trying to construct, quite impersonally, a drama, in which she figured merely as an actor. This was a momentary impression, swept away by the outbreak of his emotion.

He was moved as she had never seen him. Never before had she seen hate in his eyes, and she saw it now. It was as though an earthquake had convulsed the depths of an heretofore quiet sea, and all sorts of monsters came tossing to the surface—monstrous thoughts, blind words. She sat silent while the storm raged, her hands clenched on the arms of her chair, her eyes fixed on Basil's face, which for the first time looked ugly to her. All the strength and brightness of his aspect were gone, swamped in the nervous frenzy that shook him.

"It is his pride that is hurt," thought Teresa. "It is his vanity, his sense of possession . . ." And she felt farther removed from him at that moment than ever before. It seemed possible to her that this might really mean a break between them. It was clearly in his mind, the idea of separation. And he threw out a fierce threat—he would take the child. At that, every atom of colour left her face. She sat, ashy-white, staring at him. She felt her heart beating with great dull throbs—she felt the life ebbing out of her body in anguish. He might ruin her life, then. It was an enemy that she saw before her, and one that she could not fight. He had not the right to take the child, but the thought of such a contest between them was impossible. If it came to that, she would kill herself.

There came a silence, at last. Basil had hurled at her everything he had to say, and he stood at the far end of the room, not looking at her. She had no impulse to defend herself—it would have been physically impossible for her to utter a word, to move even. At last he went abruptly out of the room, and a moment later she heard him leave the house. She sat where he had left her, while the fire died down into a bed of coals, and grey ashes gathered over it and killed the last red gleam, and the chill of the frosty night crept into the room. . . .

When she heard him come back, hours later,

she went shivering to her bed, but she did not sleep. He was there, under the same roof with her, but a freezing terror lay between them—the terror of the end of love, of ugliness where there had been beauty, of death where there had been life. Was it possible that such a failure could be theirs? Was this thing real, or was it a spectre, a shadow, that they might still escape from? She did not know . . .

Whose was the fault? *Hers* directly, she knew. How prodigal they had both been of the real treasure of their lives, how careless of the precious thing they held! But who could have guessed that it was fragile? How had it been possible to think that what held them together needed cherishing, needed care? Had either of them really conceived before that that bond could be broken? Had either of them imagined such bankruptcy?

And now it was facing them. She knew instinctively that this was the real test of their relation. She knew that Basil's fault could not have ruined the scheme of their life together; she knew that hers could. She saw herself as the key-stone of the structure; she saw suddenly that there was, that there must be a structure, and that it must depend upon her. All the laboriousness of life, the grey aspect of duty, the necessity for infinite, incessant exertion of the will, for self-control, for self-sacrifice—all the puritan

conception of the world and the human soul—surged over her like a cold muddy sea. Was this, then, what one must live in? And to what end? To pass the endless struggle on to someone else?

For the first time, it seemed to her, in the long hours of that night, she saw the world as it really was. She saw it as a long combat, and she saw that no relation could escape this law of struggle and change, certainly not hers and Basil's. Between them, too, it must be a combat, a struggle to keep what they had conquered, a fight against those things in one another, in themselves, that tended to destroy, a long fight against decay and the death of what was precious.

She saw in a flash how she had injured a certain ideal of herself in Basil's mind; she saw all the power of that ideal to bind, to anchor him. She saw how he had set her apart, because of it, from all feminine lightness and weakness, too well known. And the violence of his reaction against the having to change his idea of her showed her how much it had meant to him. It was perhaps unreasonable, his ideal, his idea of her, but she acknowledged that he was right to want her to realise it. Now, perhaps, it would never be real to him again. She had broken one of the cords that bound him to her. She saw before her a battle to regain what she had lost, or to replace it by something else. She took up her courage in both hands and vowed herself to that

battle. If she could not be to him, now, what he had thought her, she would make herself a new value to him. They might be fellow-sinners, but he should not, for all that, hold her for less.

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At dawn he came into her room, came and put his head down on her pillow, and said wearily that he could not sleep. At that she burst out crying wildly, sobbed out passionately her humility, her regret, her fear, her love. And they clung together like two waifs in a storm, feeling darkness and danger all about them . . .

All that day Basil spent moodily by himself, fitfully trying to work, or tramping about the place. In the afternoon a cablegram came for Teresa—her informant said that the danger was past, and Crayven safe—and the storm broke out afresh. Basil's resentment surged up furiously —Teresa replied bitterly.

"You treat me like a slave," she said at last, in deep humiliation. "I am an individual as much as you. You haven't the right to judge me."

"But I do judge you. Either you belong to me, or you don't. It's as simple as that, and you can choose. If you belong to me, you don't belong even by a thought to anyone else. That's all there is to it. If you're my wife, you'll have no lovers, by letter or any other way. You'll have no more letters from Crayven——"

"You issue your commands as though I had nothing to do but obey."

"It isn't a question of commands and obeying. It's a question of seeing a clear situation, recognising what it means to me and to you . . . and I'm not sure, even if you do recognise it, that I can ever trust you again. I can't feel toward you as I did before. You'll always be different—less mine than you were . . . I can't understand how you could do this . . ."

"And you? You keep the full right to do exactly as you choose, yourself? You won't recognise any responsibility in what has happened . . ."

"The question is entirely different for me and you—you know it must be so. If I made a mistake I paid for it, long before this, and now you have made me pay a thousand times over. But you'll have to pay too, inevitably. If you were trying for revenge——!"

"No, it wasn't quite so crude as that! But perhaps it was inevitable, too, that you should suffer for what you made me suffer——"

"You suffer? You didn't, you didn't really care deeply——"

"Oh, didn't I! Didn't I! Do you believe that, Basil? I had no idea of making *you* pay, though. I had impulses to hurt you, I hated you sometimes, but I never deliberately meant to make you suffer—but perhaps you ought to, for what you

did to me. You made me worse than I was, Basil."

"Don't say that—it isn't true!" he cried. "Haven't you given me enough? . . . It isn't only for myself I feel this," he went on. "It's for you, too. It's because I know in the end it's always the woman that pays. If you injure our life together, you'll pay even more than I shall. If you, being what you are, should have a lover, you'd have to pay for that—pay in injury to your pride, in a thousand ways. A woman that gives herself to a man who doesn't deeply love her—a woman who has anything to lose—is a fool. The reaction takes him away from her, as sure as fate, and even a man who isn't a brute can't help making her feel it. You've nothing to gain in that game, Teresa, and everything to lose. And first of all you lose me—if you care anything about me. For I tell you, I couldn't stand it. If you did that sort of thing again, I believe I'd kill you—at least I'd take myself off where you'd never see me again. . . I've had more than one impulse to do it, anyway."

"What—kill me?" said Teresa, with a wan smile.

"No, go away from you. I'm not sure that I shan't, as it is. I can never believe now that you really care about me. You might find somebody else, who'd make you happier. You've always disliked a lot about me, anyway."

"And you—what would you do?"

"Oh, I'd knock about somehow and work. I've had enough of women. There isn't one that I've any respect for now."

Basil's anger sank into a cool and biting mood, which lasted on from day to day. He talked less and less to Teresa, and finally became almost altogether silent. He shut himself up in the studio for the greater part of the day, and now he was really working. He was forcing himself to work, and Teresa saw the marks of this fierce effort of will in his face. And she saw in it a new hardness, forming like a mask—a jaded, an older look . . .

Basil was cutting himself off from her. They were very little together now. She felt that some change was impending. Something was going on in his mind, of which he would not speak. Whatever it was, it would have some practical effect. She felt that he was deciding something, and without her. Was he slipping away from her . . . ? Was she to lose him, really, and for a thing so slight in itself as her relation with Crayven, whatever that relation might have indicated to Basil? She could not believe it possible. But she was proudly silent, too, while her very heart seemed turning to ice within her.

V

SILENCE came to be the atmosphere of the house—a silence with no peace in it. Basil was now working hard, at a picture for which he had made innumerable studies from models in town—a group of nude figures in a sylvan landscape, in astonishing tones of blue and yellow colour. He was absorbed, and he had no moments of relaxation. When he was not working he roamed moodily about by himself. When Teresa spoke of his picture he looked at her gloomily and answered shortly; and once when she pressed him with questions he said, "Don't talk about it. You're not interested in my work." She saw in him a desire to bury himself in that work, to shut her out. Yet he might have retreated to his studio in town, and he did not do so. He sought no other person. Apparently he wished to be near her and yet apart from her; and to make her feel daily, hourly, the cold pain of this separation of spirit.

After a week or more it grew intolerable to Teresa. She went into town, spent the day with Alice Blackley, looked up her Aunt Sophy, who had just come back from a lecture-tour in the West, and finally telegraphed to Basil that she would dine and stay the night with Alice. The

dinner was gay. Alice made up a little party on the spur of the moment. One of the men was Jack Fairfax. They went to a theatre and ended with supper at a restaurant, prolonged into the early hours of the morning. Teresa threw herself into the rather boisterous merriment of the occasion; her gaiety had a sharper, harder edge than of old. Fairfax talked to her and watched her with reawakened and growing interest. She talked to him as though she found him interesting; and before they parted it had been arranged that he was to motor out with Alice on the next day but one and lunch at Teresa's house.

That luncheon was also boisterous, owing, as Teresa now perceived, to Alice's new atmosphere. Alice had quite done being æsthetic. She was living now with smarter people, and she was conscientiously playing at being fast, as she had before played at being artistic. She drank two cocktails before luncheon, and during the meal alternately chaffed Basil and made eyes at him. Basil returned the chaff and the eyes with interest and rather brutally. Alice was beautifully dressed; Basil, with the frankness of a student of the human form, admired her figure, and received on the spot a request to paint her portrait.

"Only in town, you know," she said. "I can't come out to this dreary place. Why on earth do you stay here? Only a pair of turtle-doves like you two could stand it."

"Hard up," said Basil laconically.

"Oh, nonsense—come to town and I'll get you heaps of people to paint. Or if you've got a few thousands by you, ask Horace for a tip. He can put you on to something good, he's been making pots of money."

Basil smiled—at Teresa, and she flushed hotly over all her face. It was the first smile for ten days! It meant, she knew, only an ironic comment on that "few thousands" of Alice's—they would have felt rich with a few thousands by them. At least they still had their poverty in common! Alice noticed her flush and stared curiously at her.

"Flirting across the table," she said. "I always say you are the most domestic people I know. By the way, do you know Isabel Perry's back? She's somewhere near you here, isn't she?"

"Half a mile away," said Teresa.

"No, really! I'm coming down to stay a week-end with her next month. How jolly! You'll be there, too, perhaps—you're great chums, aren't you?"

"I haven't seen her for nearly a year."

"Oh, but you *were* great chums? Or was it Basil? Yes, now I think of it, it was Basil," and Alice smiled wantonly. She was not ill-natured, but she was a little excited.

Basil looked at Teresa and she saw boredom

and disgust in his quick glance. He became ceremoniously polite to his guests, which always meant, with Basil, that he wished them away. His finely-cut face, with the new look of austerity that the last fortnight had given it, with its new hardness, took on an expression of satiric patience. He paid Alice some outrageous compliments, and at last even her not very acute sensibilities were touched.

"What an old prig you're getting to be, Basil," she said carelessly, as they left the table. "You're so different from what you used to be—there isn't any more jollity about you now than there is about a town-pump. And you look as if butter wouldn't melt in your mouth. Really, you're a wet blanket. I'm going to take Teresa off with me in the motor. I'm sure *she* wants a little life, poor dear."

"By all means, give it to her," said Basil. "I'm quite aware that I'm dull company, as you say—I'm only a poor grub, plugging away. I don't pretend to compete with bright butterflies like you and Fairfax."

Teresa went off in the motor, which Alice insisted on driving herself at a flying speed, and which came to grief, descending a hill, at a sharp turn. A tire burst, and the machine was left with the chauffeur. Alice and Fairfax walked to a near-by station and took a train, and Teresa walked home—six miles along the silent country

roads. It was dark when she reached the house, and Basil came out to meet her.

"An accident?" he said irritably. "I thought there would be one—it's lucky your neck isn't broken. I wish you wouldn't go out on that sort of a tear again."

"Oh, it's amusing," said Teresa coldly.

"Amusing! You find those people amusing! Or was it the chance of breaking your neck that amused you?"

"Both, I think. I like the sensation of something happening, even if it's only rushing along in a motor."

"Or swilling cocktails at lunch and flirting, I suppose?"

"*I* didn't swill any cocktails. Really, Basil, you're turning over a new leaf."

"I'm not the only one. I don't care much for this last leaf that you've turned over. Alice is getting too vulgar——"

"Anything is better than living in an ice-box, as I've been doing lately."

"Is it? All right, but if you want to bring that sort out here, I shall have to work in town."

He went into the studio, and Teresa looked after him despairingly. After a few moments she followed him. The room was dark, except for the firelight. He had thrown himself into a big chair before the fire, and was staring into it,

his head bent in an attitude of weariness. She went over to him and put her arm about his shoulders. Brusquely he shook it off.

"Don't do that," he said sombrely.

"Bas . . ."

His name died on her lips. She stood for some moments, looking dumbly at his head, at the gleam of the fire-light on his hair and his averted cheek, then turned and went out of the room.

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That week Basil's father came out to spend a day. He had been ill, at his suburban home, for a month or more. Twice Teresa had been out there to see him, in a little house full of half-grown children and the odours of liberal German cooking. The Major seemed much more himself, away from that atmosphere. Yet he was greatly changed, physically, by his illness. His smart clothes hung upon a wasted figure, his cheeks had fallen in, and the old scar near his eye showed more distinctly against his present pallor. He was changed mentally, too. He talked about himself and his ailments, and the old wounds he had received in the war, which were troubling him again. His voice was querulous, and he moved feebly.

But he had all his habitual fondness for Teresa, and showed it. Several times he called her "Daughter"—the name was sweet to her. He brightened up to talk to Ronald, but a half-hour

with the child fatigued him. It tired him, too, to talk to Basil, and Teresa caught more than one troubled and puzzled glance as the old man began to feel some change in his son. It frightened him, she could see; and she saw, too, that he dreaded any fresh blow to his sapped strength; his own troubles were all he could bear. When Basil went away, saying he had work to do, and leaving them together, the Major was visibly relieved. He did not ask about Basil, but leaning over the fire he began to talk again about himself. He told Teresa in what battles he had been wounded, and strayed into detailed war-time reminiscences, and talked about his hero, Grant; and rambled and wandered on, while she half-listened, putting in a gentle word now and then, and looking at the fire.

She was thinking, first about the Major, and realising with a shock his physical breaking-up. Then she thought what a blow to him would be any trouble between herself and Basil, and how an open rupture would affect him. If it came to that—and she was thinking it might—they ought, if possible, to spare the Major the knowledge of it. They would not have very long to wait. . . . He was the only one of the family on either side who would keenly feel it. Her own parents were dead, her Aunt Sophy would rejoice at her freedom, and Nina—Nina would say she had deserved it, perhaps. A hot flush blazed up

in her face at the thought of Nina—and she became aware suddenly that she had not been listening to the Major, and that he was talking in a new tone.

He was talking about Basil's mother. He seemed to-day to be living altogether in the past. He seemed now to be living over again vividly the love of his youth. Physical weakness had made him garrulous and he talked as though he were talking to himself. He murmured and crooned over old scenes of his wooing; her looks and words; her daring, her cleverness, her beauty.

"I've never seen a woman like her, my dear," he said. "I've lived thirty years in the world since she died, and I've never seen a woman fit to tie her shoes. *I* used to tie 'em, by Jove, and put 'em on for her. She'd never put on her own shoes and stockings in her life before she married me. She might have had many a more brilliant match than *I* was, but she took me, a poor young soldier. Good God, what was *I,* to deserve such a creature? The day she promised herself to me, it seemed to me as if a goddess had stooped down and kissed me. And she was proud! . . . You can't imagine how beautiful she was . . . when she took down her hair it covered her to her knees in a glory like copper and gold . . ."

Something like a sob broke the old man's voice. "My happiness was brief," he whispered, and

became silent; his lips moving now and then, without sound.

Teresa thought: He is dying, though perhaps he does not know it. He is thinking of *her* because she was the great emotion of his life, and he feels that he is going to find her again. Perhaps he will find her. But then what will become of poor Agatha, who has cooked for him these many years—and what will *she* do when she gets to heaven and looks for him? He is her husband, too. But he's forgotten her, and her children, and even Basil—and he remembers only the woman with the copper hair that he loved thirty years ago—and has loved ever since. But perhaps there will be different heavens. The Major and his lady with the copper hair will live in one full of bright armour and glorious warriors and champing steeds; and Agatha will have one full of the most wonderful things to cook—and I daresay the Major will drop in to dinner with her occasionally, and fib to the beautiful lady about it. . . .

She glanced up at him. His eyelids had dropped and she thought he was asleep. She sat perfectly quiet for fear of waking him, and her face was tender as she looked at him.

But all the same—she thought—there might have been some difficulties in living with Basil's mother. Perhaps the Major hadn't had time to find them out. But if he had ever offended her,

he might have found his goddess a stern judge. . . . And she smiled with bitter melancholy.

The Major, when he came to go away, as she walked out with him to the carriage, took her hand and looked wistfully at her, and said:

"You're not looking well, Teresa."

"Oh, I'm quite well," she said in surprise.

The Major shook his head.

"No, you're not," he said, and she caught again that look of troubled apprehension in his eyes.

Basil, who was going to take the Major home, looked at her too, a sudden quick scrutiny, but he said nothing.

Ronald came to kiss his grandfather good-bye, and Teresa, too, kissed him; and as she leaned over the gate and watched the carriage drive away down the darkening road, it seemed to her that all the world was sinking in decay: the old man there, the fading sunset that she saw through leafless trees, her own fading life. For the Major was quite right—the strain of the last weeks was beginning to show in her face. The colour and the life had died out of it, under the freeezing pressure of pain and dread.

VI

SOME days later Mrs. Perry came to see her—greeted her without affectation of cordiality, with a square, straight look in the eyes, and said:

"I've just found out you were here. I live near by, you know."

"Yes, I know," said Teresa, perfectly at her ease.

"I have a good many people coming down to see me. Perhaps you would both come to dine some night."

"I think so—with pleasure."

"Do you like it here? Shall you stay long?"

"I don't know how long. Basil finds he can work well here. I'm sorry he happens to be in town to-day."

"Perhaps you would come on Sunday to dinner? Eight o'clock. I don't know that it will be very amusing for you—it isn't for me."

And Isabel smiled listlessly. She had changed much in the year past. She was much quieter. She sat quiet in her chair, and her long hands lay quiet in her lap. She was pale, and looked ten years older than when Teresa had seen her

last. She was plainly dressed in black, had left off all her jewels, and all the restless, nervous animation of her former manner had gone, with the glitter of the diamonds of which she had been so fond.

Teresa watched her curiously, while they chatted about Alice Blackley and various people they knew in common. She was surprised to find that the sight of Isabel moved her so little. She thought of the emotions Isabel had cost her, almost with a smile. All that seemed far away—since then she had travelled far. She could look at the other woman quite calmly, and realise impersonally her interest. Isabel was a person, one could not deny that—and much more a person now than she had been a year before. Some experience that meant a good deal to her had intervened. Teresa found herself wondering what it was. She felt she might risk a question or two. Whatever Isabel might have been once, she now plainly had herself well in hand. She could carry off a rather difficult situation, like the present, without a fault of taste. There was no danger of any scene. They understood one another. Isabel was honest—she had made no attempt to put things on a false basis. Things, as they stood, were tacitly taken for granted, that was all. And, as they talked about indifferent matters, simply, without constraint, they were approaching one another: not sentimentally or

with any impulse toward embarrassing confidences, but with the feeling of one definite personality for another, with a certain pleasure in this non-hostile contact.

"Have you been ill?" Teresa asked finally.

"Nervous prostration, I believe it was," Isabel answered sceptically. "I'm supposed to be still having it, whatever it is. It is rather pleasant now. It's simply a disinclination to do any mortal thing, and I like that. After nearly forty years of activity for its own sake, it's pleasant not to want to do anything, and to have a headache at the back of your neck if you try to do anything."

"But Alice said you were seeing a lot of people."

"Oh, just seeing them. One needn't talk, you know. They come and dine and gamble. Sometimes I don't even appear. If they didn't come I should be trying to read or something. As it is, I watch them, and enjoy my own decay. . . . Well, then you'll come on Sunday? I shall send a motor over for you. You can't drive in these country cabs—you'd freeze to death. May I see the boy?"

Ronald was brought in, and envisaged the lady with his cool but not unfriendly gaze. They entered upon the subject of automobiles, or "Wongs," as Ronald called them; and finding that the lady was the possessor of the splendid

red Wong now waiting outside the gate, Ronald warmed up, asked for a ride, and departed cheerfully in company with the stranger.

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Basil, when informed of the dinner-engagement, looked blankly at Teresa.

"You said we'd go? You might have asked me first. I don't want to go, and I don't think I shall. What have we to do with that crowd?"

Teresa's reply was less cold because of the "we."

"I think perhaps we ought to go once. It would be rather awkward not to go at all, after her visit."

Basil was plainly disconcerted. He looked at Teresa with astonishment not quite sufficiently veiled by indifference.

"You can call on her if you like. I can't see why I should go."

"It would be mere politeness to do so, I should think."

"Should you? I'm not going in for mere politeness."

"Well, there's no need for going in for bear-like savagery. I should think you'd hibernated long enough."

"I supose you're bored and want to see some men. But if we go there we shall lose a lot more money than we can afford, at bridge."

"We needn't go again. But I think she'd feel

cut if we didn't, this once. She was rather nice to-day—I liked her."

Basil dropped the talk abruptly there, but Teresa felt that her wish would prevail, and it did. And this gave her a pleasure which seemed to herself pathetic and almost humiliating.

She dressed on the night of the dinner with extraordinary care. She had chosen a mauve dress with touches of silver, which brought out the colour of her eyes. It was a French dress, of rather an extreme fashion; and she followed out the same note of exaggeration in the way she did her hair, making its natural mass appear more strikingly, just as her slight and supple figure was shown to the greatest advantage. Usually she was content to leave her good points more or less to make their own effect, simply; but on this evening her appearance had the touch of obvious art. It would not have been more obvious if she had put rouge on her cheeks. She preferred to look pale; and her pallor was as intense and striking as the rouge would have been.

She came down from her room ready cloaked and hooded, and Basil did not see her otherwise till she entered Mrs. Perry's drawing-room, where a dozen people were assembled. Teresa was aware on her entry that she was frankly stared at, and that Basil was, for a moment, staring too. Among the guests were several that she knew—the Kerrs,

Alice Blackley, and Fairfax. Isabel Perry made a simple and rather majestic figure in black velvet, which had seen several seasons, with her hair quite carelessly done. Simplicity was decidedly her note now, a perfectly genuine one, and there was a certain air of the great lady about her. As she had said to Teresa, she made no effort for her guests. They seemed to have been asked because they could amuse themselves.

Isabel's husband, as usual, was not present, and Teresa found herself at table between Fairfax and a tall, blonde, very handsome youth of the smartest aspect. She saw that Basil sat at his hostess' left hand, and that Isabel talked impartially to him and to the dull Mr. Kerr on her right. Isabel's Spanish eyes looked sad, and seemed to explore remote horizons. Basil also looked remote, and Teresa noted that he drank steadily each wine in succession, even champagne, which he did not like.

There were more men than women in the party, and Teresa soon found that she had an audience of four and that she was talking with animation. She would not let Fairfax absorb her attention, and his frankly amorous manner interested her less than the ingenuous remarks of the blonde youth, who openly admired her also and told her why. He had evidently been drinking a little too much, but his exuberance amused her.

"I can't stand sly-looking women," he con-

fided to her. "And I can't stand the bread-and-butter sort either. I like women who have a spice of the devil in them, you know, and yet look good, too. Women who've seen the world and all the kingdoms thereof. And they needn't be too young, either. I admire them most about your age. I don't mean you're not young. Why, you might be eighteen, hang it—I beg your pardon—but what I mean is, there's experience in your face. I like experience. I never care to talk to a young girl—they've got no ideas of their own. And I don't like women that pretend to know it all, either—like Mrs. Blackley. She's so awfully knowing. I don't like that dress she's got on—it's affected. I hate those Empire things—they're only suitable for teagowns—and I hate women wearing artificial flowers and things in their hair."

"You're rather hard to please, it seems to me," said Teresa.

"Well, I know what I like, and why shouldn't I? I like your dress—it's a lovely colour, and that silver embroidery on the chiffon is beautiful. Do you live in New York?"

"No, I live out here in the country. My husband is a painter—there he is up at the end of the table. I have one child and we live on four thousand a year."

"How—how clever of you," stammered the boy. Teresa smiled sweetly on him and turned

back to the others. There was no talk that interested her, but under her boredom she was conscious of a kind of excitement. It was pleasant after all—to be among people again, to be admired, to have a certain feeling of lightness. She was frivolous in her talk with Fairfax, and sharp when he tried to be serious.

"I wish I knew what has happened to you," he murmured at last, exasperatedly. "We were friends once, you know. And you have changed completely—not only to me, but your very looks have changed. The lines of your face are sharper and harder ——"

"Age, of course," interposed Teresa, "but it isn't gallant of you to point it out. And to-night, too, when I really tried hard to make myself presentable."

"You are beautiful to-night, and you know it. What I mean has nothing to do with that. It's a spiritual hardness and sharpness—it's as though your face had been worked over, remodelled ——"

"Massage, perhaps? No, I don't go in for any of those beautifying processes."

Fairfax stifled an angry ejaculation.

"Well, so be it," he said, and his rather sensual face showed a dark flush. "I see you don't want to talk to me as you did once. I don't know that I'm given you any reason to snub me, but if it amuses you——"

"No, it doesn't, Jack," said Teresa, with sudden feeling—partly regret at having hurt whatever feeling *he* had, partly fear lest something ugly in him should revenge that former friendship he spoke of. "I don't want to snub you. But I *am* changed, that's true. And the reason is, I'm unhappy. Now, for Heaven's sake, don't say another word."

"I beg your pardon," he said in a low voice. In his startled, grave look she saw this time genuine feeling. He was silent, while Teresa plunged back into chatter with her younger neighbours. At the end of the dinner, amid the brilliant disorder of the dessert, with the women leaning their bare elbows on the table and most of them talking loud, Fairfax leaned toward the laughing Teresa and said:

"I say, if you ever want anything or anybody, you know, I'm at your service, and anything I've got."

She nodded, barely looking at him, as the women left the table. His words sent a cold shiver over her. That it could be supposed possible that she should need a service from Fairfax! What did he imagine? Why had she said that to him—that she was unhappy? Need the world know it, if she was? Were people to comment on her inmost life—was her soul to go in rags before them? "Have you heard? The Ransomes have separated! I thought it couldn't last! He

was rather gay, you know—and she ——?" Her pride flamed up, and anger against herself, for that betrayal to Fairfax.

In the drawing-room Alice Blackley began to talk to her in a high key of frivolity, but to Teresa's relief a message was brought in by a servant: Would Mrs. Blackley go to the library for a few moments and see Mr. Perry? Alice swept out with a conscious smile. Teresa knew this little custom of the dyspeptic and semi-invisible host; he liked to chat occasionally with someone who amused him.

When the men came in, bridge began. Teresa's partner was the blonde youth, who played extremely well, and she won nearly forty dollars. She was watchful of herself now, self-possessed and coolly gay.

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Her high spirits left her suddenly when she and Basil got into the motor for their homeward ride. She was silent, muffled in her furs. Something of her old feeling about Isabel had come up again, and the fact that she was riding in Isabel's motor irritated her. A mere nothing had reillumined that feeling—she had seen Basil and Isabel look at one another, and in that look she seemed to see their past intimacy. It was nothing, for Basil could not very well altogether avoid looking at Isabel. There had been no ardour in that glance, certainly, but there had

been, or so Teresa fancied, an equally unavoidable *recognition*. Now she passionately regretted having insisted on going.

"Did you enjoy it?" asked Basil coolly.

"No! . . . Why, did you?"

"Certainly not. I was bored to tears—but I expected to be. I thought you seemed to be amusing yourself."

"I wasn't, though."

"At any rate, you were amusing Fairfax and some of those college boys. And I haven't seen you look as gay for weeks. Why don't you admit that you enjoyed your flirtations?"

Basil had become aggressive and rather excited.

"Don't talk nonsense," said Teresa wearily.

"Nonsense, is it? Why, you were got up so that no man in the room could help looking at you. I never saw you dressed that way before. I thought it rather bad form."

"I daresay you prefer Mrs. Perry's form. I thought you looked at her appreciatively."

"You thought nothing of the sort. I don't know what you call the way Fairfax looked at you. It was indecent."

"Was it? How interesting. I didn't observe it."

"Then you were the only person in the room who didn't. You mean you liked it, I suppose. Of course, you can get plenty of that sort of thing, if you like it. You're beautiful, and you can have

all sorts of men after you if you look and behave as you did to-night."

"Be quiet, Basil," said Teresa dully.

"Why should I be quiet? Why shouldn't I admire you, too? You *were* beautiful—you took my breath away when you came into the room . . ."

The automobile stopped. They were at home. Basil helped Teresa out, stopped to tip the chauffeur, and hurried into the house. He came into Teresa's room, where she stood in the middle of the floor, staring at the fire, which was almost out.

"Why don't you have them keep your room warmer?" he asked sharply. "You'll freeze here—why hasn't somebody stayed up to look after the fire? I'll ring."

"No, don't—they've gone to bed. It doesn't matter."

"Well, it does."

Basil threw off his coat and vigorously made up the fire. Teresa emerged from her furs and sat down before it.

"Keep your wraps on till the place gets warm, why don't you? You've got nothing on."

"I don't feel it," she said indifferently.

Basil looked at her, shivered slightly—looked away—looked at her again. He took her coat and put it about her.

"I wish you'd take some care of yourself—you

look ill, and apparently you're trying to *be* ill."

"I thought you said I looked well," said Teresa, still staring at the mounting flames.

"I said you looked beautiful . . ."

He bent down and touched her arm, kissed it, and suddenly clasped her in a fierce embrace.

Teresa pushed him away and got up.

"Don't do that," she said under her breath.

She stood looking at him, her body tense, her eyes shining like steel under half-lowered lids.

"Don't you—don't you care for me any more?" he stammered.

"I hate you!"

He waited a moment, then turned toward the door.

But to see him go, like that, to feel that silence shut down upon her again! No—at any price, on any terms, not that! She called him, and her voice was almost a shriek. She ran to him and threw herself into his arms.

VII

TWO days later came the first snow storm of the winter. The house was cold and uncomfortable. Basil was alone in it all day, for Teresa had gone, early in the morning, to look up a real estate agent. Their plan of buying a house had lain dormant all this time, but now the idea had taken possession of her mind, and with all her energy she was bent on working it out. For one element of doubt, which had lately reduced all plans to chaos, was now removed. It was certain, at least, that she and Basil were not to separate. They would go on together; on what terms Teresa was not yet absolutely sure, but, she rather thought, on her terms.

She came back late for dinner, tired, chilled, unsuccessful in her first search, but cheerful, to find Basil hanging restlessly about the house, not having been able, he said, to work that day. Over their dinner she described gaily the outrageous defects of the houses she had seen, and praised their present domicile by comparison. Basil was gloomy, drank a great deal of whisky, listened absently to what she was saying, and finally said that he thought they would have to stay where they were for the winter; they couldn't

afford anything better. Teresa disagreed instantly. She had her plan. "We are going into town for three months," she announced firmly. "At least, as soon as your picture is finished. And we shall do that every year. Neither of us can live absolutely buried as we are here, all the year round. We're too young—or not young enough—for that! You need people and I need them."

"I don't need anything but work—and peace," said Basil sombrely, "and we're in debt."

"No matter. You'll sell your picture, and I shall make something. And we'll make up next year. We shall take this house on a long lease, or buy it on the instalment plan. We shall live here nine months of the year. We can live quietly and cheaply, and you can work. This studio suits you, and I can make a charming garden. After what I've seen to-day, I'm sure we can't do much better. By degrees we'll make the house over to suit us. It will be comfortable, except in the dead of winter, and then we shall take a little apartment in New York. There, Basil, that's my idea—do you like it?"

"Well enough. But I don't believe we can make it go."

"I shall make it go," said Teresa. "To-morrow I shall look for a place in town—something over in the old Chelsea district—cheap and not too nasty. How did work go to-day?"

"Not so well. I'm still trying to pull those two figures together. It'll come, I think. But I couldn't work to-day. Everything seems so grey —all the colour gone out of the world. I feel terribly old."

"You've been working hard this month."

"It isn't that. But I'm sad. I've been sadder to-day than ever before in my life. I've been taking account of stock."

They had dined at a small table before the great log-fire in the studio. Now the table had been pushed away. Teresa was leaning back in a low chair, very tired and drowsy from the heat after her long drive. Basil got up and walked about the room, stopping before his picture, of which the glowing blue and yellow colour and the sharp lines made an almost violent effect, even in the subdued light.

"Yes, Basil?"

"An account of stock," he repeated. "I've done a lot of thinking to-day, because I couldn't work. And I couldn't work because you weren't in the house. I thought about you. And I was sad because I know now that I can never get away from you. For a while I thought I might—I wanted to. I wanted to have some new experience, new life, apart from you—something that wouldn't cost me so dear. I want it still—but I know I can't get it. I can't get away from you. You're in my blood . . ."

He turned and walked abruptly up and down. Teresa was silent, spreading her long fingers to the blaze of the fire.

"Always before," he went on, "I've had a feeling that there were any amount of things before me, in work, in life. It's still so—more than ever so—in my work. I'm at the beginning of something infernally interesting. If you've considered that thing I'm doing, you can see it. . . . But I don't care about work alone, if I can't live too . . . if I can't be happy or at peace. . ."

Still she was silent, and after a moment, standing before the picture but not looking at it, he said:

"Here I am then—thirty-three years old, with a family, not enough money to live on comfortably, with an idea of painting which it will take me years to work out, and which probably won't bring in any money for some time to come, if it ever does. I believe in it. I could work with more interest, more intensity than ever before, if the other conditions of my life were right. But I'm not sure that I can work in spite of them."

"What conditions?"

"Well, money. I feel I ought to be making some, but if I do that, I can't do anything else."

"As to money, give my plan a trial for a year. Let me see what I can do. I've ideas for some work too—some models for little things in silver that I'm sure will sell. And we are not so far

behind now. I'm sure by next year we shall have caught up. If necessary I'll borrow from Aunt Sophy. She'd be glad to lend me anything."

"Borrow? I can't see that that would make us better off."

"Only for the time. We've been extravagant this last year, and then my—my illness ——"

Teresa's head drooped, and her eyes closed sadly. Basil looked at her for a moment, then came up and touched her hair.

"Poor Teresa," he said softly.

That note of tenderness had been missing these many weeks. Teresa sat motionless; two tears rolled from under her closed eyelids.

"Well . . . what else was it, besides money?" she asked, after a moment.

"Oh, I have been thinking about you—and how we are bound together."

"Yes."

"And yet you did a great deal to break that down. You made me want to break it. You've made me suffer—and I can't love you as I did before."

"Can't you,"

"No, you don't belong to me as you did. You were such a beautiful thing to me. I care for you more in one way than I did, now that I realise all the strength of your hold on me. I couldn't work to-day because you weren't in the house. I want you with me, all the more perhaps because

you're not really with me. But it isn't as it was once. The peace and sweetness of it is gone . . ."

He spoke almost dreamily, as though the whole thing were remote, objective, and he looked at Teresa as though she were miles away.

"We shall get it back," said Teresa.

"No . . . never . . ."

"Then we shall get something better. Peace and sweetness aren't all . . . what I see," she said, still with her eyes closed and the tears on her cheeks, "is that what we have is the main thing, the best thing. I feel now that it can't be destroyed, neither by what I do nor by what you do You take me with my weaknesses, as I take you with yours. I don't say it will be all peace and sweetness—we're too near one another for that. I suppose you will often hurt or irritate me—perhaps I shall hurt or irritate you. I don't want to do it—but I can't promise that I shan't—I promise, though, to leave you as free as possible."

"But I can't promise to leave you free," said Basil darkly.

"No matter."

"No—you mean you'll take as much freedom as you want. But what I can't endure is suspecting you."

With sudden violence he took up a letter that had been lying on his desk and threw it into Teresa's lap. She saw Crayven's writing on the en-

velope. Without hesitation she took it, bent forward and dropped the unopened letter into the hottest part of the fire.

"Why did you do that? Were you afraid I should want to read it?" demanded Basil.

"No. I'm tired of all that."

"Of what? Not of his letters?"

"Yes—everything about it. It doesn't matter."

"But it does . . . !"

"I tell you it doesn't! What you do matters more, because you don't love me as much as I do you."

"Love me? You're in love with Crayven!"

"You've let me nearly die this last month of your indifference . . ." A sob broke Teresa's voice. "I tell you I can't live in that way. If you didn't love me——"

"Someone else would, I suppose."

"No, if *you* didn't, I should die. I have been dying this last month—I've been really ill. Look at me—do you see how thin I am?"

She sprang up and went close to Basil.

"I see that you're beautiful," he said softly. "Ah, you have me! . . ."

"Then be good to me! We shan't live forever!"

"I feel that I've lived a hundred years or so."

She answered with Lady Macbeth's appeal: "'We are but young'!"

And half-smiling, passionately, she drew him

down, in her arms, into the great chair, and curled against him. They were both silent for a time, cheek to cheek, looking into the fire . . . Each of them was seeing, perhaps, their past together, and its many memories. Each of them was silent before the future.



THE END









